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ABSTRACT

Twenty-seven articles covering many phases of the language arts at all instructional levels, with an emphasis on the issues of individualization, are collected in this book. The broad scope of topics is revealed in such titles as "From Collages to Poetry," "Individualized Response to the Short Story," "Students Grade Themselves in Writing," "Inside the Classroom Without Walls," "Teacher-Student Dialogue," "How Much Editing in the Primary Grades?" "Hawaii's Peer Tutoring Experiences," "Open Lab: Seeing Kids as People," "Homework: A Starting Point for Individualization," and "What Can We Really Individualize?" (This document previously announced as ED 045 666.) (MF)

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in Teaching English
1970-1971

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Humanizing English: DO NOT FOLD SPINDLE OR MUTILATE

Edited by Edward R. Fagan
and Jean Vandell

CS 200 457

Classroom Practices in Teaching English 1970-1971

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Humanizing English:

DO NOT FOLD SPINDLE OR MUTILATE

An Eighth Report of the Committee
On Classroom Practices, 1970-1971
Cochairmen: Edward R. Fagan and
Jean Vandell

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Preface

Materials which follow this introduction are as diverse and unique as the individuals who met with the Classroom Practices Committee in Washington, D.C., last November. That meeting, attended by approximately one hundred fifty Council members, culminated with the recommendation that the 1970-1971 edition of *Practices* focus upon our colleagues' attempts to humanize the teaching of English from nursery school through post-doctoral study. Those in attendance at the Washington meeting represented elementary, junior high and senior high school teachers as well as junior college, college, and university teachers. Differences about the content and methods for teaching English were apparent within each of these groups. The differences were obvious between those teachers at all levels who regard content as pivotal to any English program and those who regard students as keys to program development in English. Spokesmen for these polar viewpoints found themselves moving toward a common area which decreased the professional distance between them —the affective domain, which became the overarching focus for all participants at the meeting of the Classroom Practices Committee.

Definitions were debated by participants as were the strategies for helping students to discover myriad definitions of sample concepts. Yet the climate of this debate was professional, that is, whether participants felt that "classical" or "modern" contents should undergird patterns for the teaching of English, they always qualified their recommendations by noting that students' feelings and individuality were prime directives in designs for learning.

Each of the Washington participants was invited to submit articles for the 1970-1971 edition of *Practices* based upon the theme, Humanizing English: Do Not Fold, Spindle, or Mutilate. Requests for manuscripts were also solicited through the Council's national and affiliate publications. From the more than 130 papers received, the committee chose 27 manuscripts to be included in this edition. Articles selected range in length from approximately two hundred fifty to twenty five hundred words; they cover many phases of the language arts at all levels. Many of the practices described can be adapted for various teaching levels.

That the theme selected by participants at the Washington, D.C., meeting of the Classroom Practices Committee touched a professional nerve can be inferred from the number of manuscripts submitted by English teachers at all levels. The previous year the committee had to resort to every communication device known to get thirty-nine manuscripts. Nor is the interest shown in the theme for *Practices 1970-1971*

likely to diminish; student strikes, curricular reforms, elective programs, and individualization are just a few of the contemporary forces shaping all educational designs. The pace of change is accelerating, and the price of such change is sometimes painful, as the tone of some of the following articles will illustrate. Yet the encouraging fact apparent in our colleagues' reports on classroom practices—those rejected as well as those published—is that we are trying, we are learning, and we are helping students to discover the ecstasies of the language in myriad contexts.

The cochairmen wish to thank those who have helped the committee to prepare this publication. They are especially grateful to Allen Berger, Morris Landiss, and Lucile Lindberg, who with them read and evaluated all manuscripts considered.

Edward R. Fagan
Jean Vandel!
Cochairmen

Edward R. Fagan

Outputs: An Introduction

Outputs are one measure systems analysts use to check the worth of inputs and treatments for a given system. Education is described as a system and one of its inputs is English. When English is inputted (systems analysts use the verb without hesitation) throughout school systems, its treatment is affected by teachers, textbooks, films, tapes, curricular guides, and rules. This treatment is then administered to students who become the outputs of the system and, in one sense, a measure of the system's effectiveness. English as it is taught in some schools today is perilously close to a dehumanized mass production system where outputs are judged almost exclusively by standardized tests. Results of such standardization are a major concern to some of our English-teaching colleagues. James Moffett, for example, scores the testing process by pointing out that:

> It [standardized testing] is packaged into materials and nested down in the souls of administrators. It evaluates curriculums and therefore dictates curriculums. . . . All this has taken place haphazardly so far in English, but now that behaviorists have teamed up with Pentagon cost accountants imported from Ford and GM, we're about to take the guesswork out of accountability. . . . But one thing we can say: the educational budget is well accounted for even if the education is of no account . . .[1]

Moffett's reference to "behaviorists" reminds us that "behavioral objectives" are increasingly required as a major foundation for curricular designs in English.

Opposed to such relatively closed learning systems are students whose life style requires more freedom, and these students, according to Bill Waugh, Associated Press education writer, are seething at the system's injustices, real or imagined. Waugh writes:

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[1]James Moffett, "Coming on Center," *English Journal*, 59 (April 1970), 533.

> America's high schools—from the ghettoes to the suburbs—today are like boiling cauldrons. . . . Students from New York to California say their schools operate in prisonlike atmosphere—armed guards, fenced school yards, and in one California school, locked classroom doors. . . . Other complaints range from racism to censored newspapers, uninspired teachers to unrealistic regulations and refusal of school administrators and parents to listen to student demands for an education that relates to the world they must live in.[2]

Waugh's observations are not new to many of us; some of us feel that cracking down on these kids would cure the problem, but Waugh disagrees:

> There is no evidence that tougher rules, stricter discipline, or calling the police cools the situation. It only serves to increase the tension. You are not going to scare kids into submission. They have neither respect nor fear of the police.[3]

Waugh's observation about respect and fear in our students is echoed by another of our colleagues, Florence Lewis, who predicts a dismal future for the classroom English teacher:

> In any case, the kids want to talk; they don't want to write. They want to talk and to talk about feelings. They debate endlessly, and to no avail because there doesn't have to be "avail" where they come from. Their feelings are as good as yours on any day of the week. They saw it all on TV. They will dispute any authority. Anyway, there is no authority, because adults and even God have demonstrated that no one has the right to leadership. Love is leadership and feelings are. They will take on God, so what's a teacher?[4]

Mrs. Lewis describes how youth distort language and lie to embarrass what they call the establishment; she concludes with a vision of herself in the future, living in a world dedicated to speed, feelies, and acid with Marshal McLuhan as world prophet and Tim Leary as his high priest, while bearded ten-year olds chase her down the street with punk, flute and incense admonishing her to "Feel, lady, feel."[5]

Hyperbole aside, Lewis and others raise serious questions about the

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[2]William Waugh, "High Schools Across Nation Boiling Like Cauldrons," *Centre Daily Times* (State College, Pa.) April 29, 1970, p. 9.

[3]Waugh, p. 9.

[4]Florence Lewis, "Aural-Schmaural, I'm a Hypo-Typo," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 51 (April 1970), 429.

[5]Lewis, p. 429.

future of English programs in the decade ahead. Some of our colleagues maintain that we are witnesses to the twilight of our discipline; others feel that the discipline will survive under a broader rubric, perhaps that of communications. Still others feel that the United Kingdom might provide us with a model for survival because it has met and conquered a relevancy crisis. Yet the outstanding difference between American and United Kingdom English programs, according to the Retrospect section of the Squire and Applebee study, *Teaching English in the United Kingdom*, is England's deemphasis of "cognitive learning." Details of this "deemphasis" are pivotal to the 1970-1971 theme of *Practices* and are described from the viewpoint of a British teacher of English in the Squire-Applebee report:

> Writing, speaking, interpreting, and reacting are thus seen as similar and central to a process in which the ultimate end is a fuller, more sensitive response to life itself. While engaged in this evolving experience of learning how to live and how to respond to living, the child will acquire some skills, some knowledge, some perception of form, but such acquisition is peripheral and incidental to the totality of the experience itself. "We do not think that anyone can instruct children in how to 'realize' their experiences in words, how to shape them, how to 'choose' words or to use varied sentence structures before they write their compositions. Indeed, even markers should not approach a composition armed with stylistic criteria: they should set out to be as receptive as they can, to be 'good listeners'!" writes a committee of the London Association for the Teaching of English in arguing against the direct teaching of language skills. This is why many British teachers see no need to plan a curriculum to teach discrete skills, and this, in essence, is why so many cannot share the American concern with the literary heritage, grammar, or rhetoric. It is not that they fail to recognize that such subject matter exists; it is rather that they focus on different goals.[6]

We should keep in mind that the Squire and Applebee team studied only the best groups of students and teachers in forty-two schools in the United Kingdom and, for such students, curricular focus on discrete skills might be secondary to the development of sensitivity to life. But with America's new concern for "accountability," as described by Moffett, to ignore discrete skills in "literary heritage, grammar, and rhetoric" in contemporary English classrooms would be tantamount to inciting a

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[6] James R. Squire and Roger K. Applebee, *Teaching English in the United Kingdom:* A Comparative Study (Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1969) pp. 245-246.

taxpayers' revolt. One practical strategem for bridging the affective-cognitive domains in contemporary American classrooms is that of individualization.

Individualization is an idealized concept which implies that each student will work at his own pace, select his own curriculum, master the contents of all subjects studied at a level of 80 percent or better and, in short, learn what he wants to learn at a time and pace suitable to him. Obviously, this idealized learning state is rare in today's English education programs. But throughout the material which follows, the terms *individual, individualization, student-selected contents,* and the like recur. Several articles are devoted to techniques for *adaptative education,* which is defined as "the tailoring of subject matter presentations to fit the special requirements and capabilities of each learner."[7] Far from the idealized concept of individualization, these practices are a middle ground between the United Kingdom's focus on the affective domain and America's focus on the discrete skills of English as a discipline.

Inevitably, an "in" concept such as individualization is abused and some not-so-promising practices which attempt to humanize English teaching are revealed as canned linear presentations in an authoritarian classroom climate. One individual program, for example, used programmed text material on a television display where each frame of the material could be shown to a large group of students for a short time. Students would pick the correct option and then the program would move on to another frame. This procedure is individual instruction—the antithesis of individualized instruction. Such individual instruction assumes that learning occurs between two relatively fixed points in time. When such time-bound perspectives dictate the learning climate, static presentations such as those contained in books, films, video tapes, and lectures become the basis for organizing learning.

Another not-so-promising practice begins at the other extreme where students each day are permitted to vote about the English learning activities they will undertake. And what they vote, as Mrs. Lewis has pointed out, is to talk, not with any purpose in mind, not with a concern for organization, just to vent their feelings. But, the argument goes on, this is all right; after all, they are using English and practicing conversational skills. Maybe. It is not-so-promising practices like this that make our colleagues wonder what *discipline* means as applied to English. If we have a body of content with some principles for engaging students with that

[7]Harold E. Mitzel, "The Impending Instructional Revolution," *Phi Delta Kappan,* 51 (April 1970), 436.

content, and if we are charged by local, state, and national authorities with the responsibility for diagnosing and guiding students into more efficient uses of English, then the practice of acceding to student demands for what they define as English is suspect.

A final not-so-promising practice might be classified as the extravaganza. This practice requires that an English class spend a full semester (eighteen weeks) making costumes, learning interpretive dancing, arranging guitar selections, learning how to use public address systems and other electronic devices so that a gigantic happening can be presented to the whole community during the last week of the semester. Some of these activities when organized and articulated with appropriate contents from English curricular objectives are valuable as means to an end. But the extravaganza practice makes the performance an end in itself, and teachers who use it seem to fulfill Santayana's definition of a fanatic, that is, one who redoubles his efforts after he has lost sight of his objectives.

Fortunately, fewer not-so-promising practices are apparent, as the articles which follow will reveal. But with the pressure to provide more individualization in our English classrooms it behooves us all to read, carefully, Martin's article which anchors this book. The questions he raises about individualization are realistic and require honest answers not only by English teachers but also by school administrators who are intrigued by the notion of individualization without being fully aware of its limitations and demands upon the teaching staff.

Besides Martin's article, others in this collection lean to one side or another on the issue of humanizing English and the resulting implications for today's classrooms. Some of our colleagues call for more structure in our teaching, others suggest that we reduce structure and increase process, but all are concerned about guiding students to that efficiency point where confidence and skill in the uses of English make students independent of their teachers.

Such students are the desirable outputs of English programs in the American educational system. But English teachers always aspired to such objectives though they were sometimes hampered by the system. We have journeyed far since Naomi White's milestone statement of over twenty years ago when English outputs were a major concern of her attempts to humanize English:

> I have taught in high school for ten years. During that time I have given assignments to, among others, a murderer, an evangelist, a pugilist, a thief, and an imbecile.
>
> The murderer was a quiet little boy who sat on the front seat and regarded me with pale blue eyes; the evangelist, easily the most popular

boy in the school, had the lead in the senior play; the pugilist lounged by the geraniums; the thief was a gay-hearted Lothario with a song on his lips, and the imbecile, a soft-eyed little animal seeking the shadows.

The murderer awaits death in the State penitentiary; the evangelist has lain a year now in the village churchyard; the pugilist lost an eye in a brawl in Hong Kong; the thief, by standing on tiptoe, can see out of the windows of his room from the county jail, and the once gentle-eyed little moron beats his head against the padded wall in the State asylum.

All of these pupils once sat in my room, sat and looked at me gravely across worn brown desks. I must have been a great help to those students when I taught them the rhyming scheme of the Elizabethan sonnet and how to diagram a complex sentence.[8]

The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Pennsylvania

[8] Naomi White, "I Taught Them All," *Wisconsin English Bulletin*, n. d.

Elwyn Breaux

The Student's Image: A By-Product

Teach any American child thirty-five weeks of the year, by precept or by example, that only poems by English authors are worthy of study, that only mathematical formulas originated by Greek mathematicians really work, that only music composed by German composers is worthy of appreciation, and he may finish the year with all *As* on his report card, but *Fs* in the unmeasured areas like self-esteem, confidence, and optimism. One week or one month or one course set aside to tell him that some Americans have made outstanding achievements will not change the impression he has received.

As a black teacher in a predominantly black college, I have sought for many years to build up rather than to tear down the student's image of himself. I know from experience that the many philosophers and poets who have paraphrased the idea "What you believe speaks so loud I can not hear what you say" are right. Teaching English composition and courses in literature, I have found many ways to accomplish the objectives of my courses, which include the personal objectives of my students: to learn and build images of worth. Only during the past few years have I been able to obtain readers and anthologies including works by black writers. Yet I have found many materials in my college library and have tried to think of ingenious ways to use them.

In teaching figures of speech such as the simile, metaphor, and pun, I have found rich resources in the work of Eldridge Cleaver, Ralph Ellison, and Langston Hughes. Students never fail to look twice at Cleaver's sentence: "Seeing her image slipping away from the weak fingers of his mind as soon as she has gone, his mind fights for a token of her on which to peg memory."[1] The idea of a poor memory or a fading memory being called "weak fingers of the mind" gives them an understanding of how figures of speech communicate more effectively and lucidly. Ralph Elli-

[1]Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul On Ice* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), p. 24.

son's similes "lenses as thick as the bottom of a coca-cola bottle"[2] and "my body like glass inside"[3] are easily remembered. S.I. Hayakawa's well taught principle that the word is not the thing is clearly illustrated by Simple, Langston Hughes's character whose wife, Joyce, likes foreign food. Simple says: "A meat ball by any other name is still a meat ball just the same." Joyce causes the remark by ordering Bola-Bolas in a restaurant in the Philippines. "Bola probably means 'ball' in their language," Simple says.[4] Not only do my students learn important facts about language, but I think they learn something else, too, something that teachers rarely if ever teach or test for: the impact of the information on the personality of the learner. They learn that black writers have creative ability and language know-how.

A teacher may not have the privilege to choose the text book he uses, even if he has a definite preference. Every teacher, however, has the privilege of making daily quizzes and study assignments and, sometimes, final examinations. It is in the quizzes and special assignments that one may project the works by black men.

Like most instructors who attempt to teach English, I go about the task daily of having students learn to recognize and write an English sentence. Frequently I quote scientific research to show that English is not based merely on opinion or subjective value judgments. For example, Ivor K. Davies reports interesting research concerning sentences:

> Research by G.A. Miller and his associates at Harvard and P.C. Wason at University College, London, indicates that the time taken to respond correctly to a sentence varies directly with the grammatical structure employed. Affirmative, active and declarative sentences are most readily processed and understood. Make the sentence negative or passive and understanding of the message is delayed.[5]

To let students test this reported research, I might give them three long sentences written by Ernest Hemingway, James Baldwin, and William Faulkner, respectively. Selected sentences, though lengthy, would be affirmative, active and declarative, such as the following:

1. There were mists over the river and clouds on the mountain and the trucks splashed mud on the road and the troops were muddy and wet in their capes; their rifles were wet and under their capes the two leather cartridge-boxes

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[2]Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: New American Library, 1952), p. 179.
[3]Ellison, p. 217.
[4]Langston Hughes, *Simple's Uncle Sam* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1965), p. 4.
[5]Ivor K. Davies, "Get Immediate Relief With An Algorithm," *Psychology Today*, III (April 1970), 54.

on the front of the belts, gray leather boxes heavy with the packs of clips of thin, long 6.5 mm. cartridges, bulged forward under the capes so that the men, passing on the road, marched as though they were six months gone with child.[6]

2. Dirt was in the walls and the floorboards, and triumphed beneath the sink where roaches spawned; was in the fine ridges of the pots and pans, scoured daily, burnt black on the bottom, hanging above the stove; was in the wall against which they hung, and revealed itself where the paint had cracked and leaned outward in stiff squares and fragments, the paper-thin underside webbed with black.[7]
3. He made the earth first and peopled it with dumb creatures, and then He created man to be His overseer on the earth and to hold suzerainty over the earth and the animals on it in His name, not to hold for himself and his descendants inviolable title forever, generation after generation, to the oblongs and squares of the earth, but to hold the earth mutual and intact in communal anonymity of brotherhood, and all the fee He asked was pity and humility and sufferance and endurance and the sweat of his face for bread.[8]

Many facts, techniques, and understandings may be taught using these sentences. The fact that the science student is "testing" research adds to his interest. The fact that a black man wrote one of the sentences may make for another kind of interest.

My last point concerns the teaching of poems written in dialect, particularly in what has been termed black dialect. It was called to my attention only recently in a methods class that a number of predominantly black high schools forbid the teaching of poems written in dialect, presumably because there is fear that such teaching will discourage the learning of the national language (standard English). My experience and my knowledge of psychology lead me to believe that this is an erroneous hypothesis. Although not in complete agreement with James Sledd's thesis that when we reject the dialect we reject the child and that standard English is the grammar of white supremacy, I do believe that we must take the child where we find him and that all people speak a dialect. Never seeing a sentence that resembles what the child usually hears can be a shocking experience for him.

I find great value in teaching poems written in dialect. Although black and white critics have said that much of Paul Laurence Dunbar's dialect is phony or unrealistic, there are poems written in dialect that are very realistic. Reading such poems, the student sees and hears something

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[6]Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell To Arms* (New York: Scribner's, 1929), p. 4.
[7]James Baldwin, *Go Tell It On the Mountain* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1963), p. 21.
[8]William Faulkner, *Three Famous Short Novels: Spotted Horses/ Old Man/ The Bear* (New York: Random House, 1942), p. 247.

familiar; more importantly, he begins to recognize the *difference* between the dialect and the standard form. I believe there is no better way to show both respect for and recognition of dialects, together with the contrast between them and standard English.

For example, my students read silently and aloud Dunbar's delightful poem "The Party" which begins:

> Dey had a gread big pahty down to Tom's de othah night
> Was I dah? You bet. I nevah in my life see sich a sight;
> All de folks f'om fou' plantations was invited, an' dey come,
> Dey come troopin' thick ez chillun when dey hyeahs a fife an' drum.[9]

After the long poem has been read, always to the delight of students, I divide the class into groups and have each group rewrite the poem using standard grammar. Frequently they see that they, too, pronounce a word differently from what its spelling or the dictionary seem to require. Many southerners of all races say "jes" instead of "just." Many Americans use "fuh" for "for." Similarly, some Bostonians pronounce "party" as though it were spelled "pahty."

Next, to reverse the procedure, I present another poem by the same author not written in dialect and have the students rewrite it in dialect. Dunbar's "Compensation" lends itself well to such translation:

> Because I had loved so deeply
> Because I had loved so long,
> God in his great compassion
> Gave me the gift of song.
>
> Because I have loved so vainly,
> And sung with such faltering breath,
> The Master in infinite mercy
> Offers the boon of Death.[10]

The very fact that the mood of this latter poem is different from the mood of the other gets across the idea that formal English is more appropriate for some purposes.

Students learn many other things while they are learning what we

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[9]James A. Emanuel and Theodore L. Gross, eds., *Dark Symphony* (New York: Free Press, 1968), p. 38.

[10]Benjamin Brawley, *The Negro in Literature and Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: AMS Press, 1917), p. 40.

have listed as course objectives. I believe that the other things they learn can be and may be the most important, the longest remembered. Certainly English teachers are paid to teach communication skills. At the same time, they can build confidence and healthy self-images by carefully selecting the patterns of literature they use.

Langston University
Langston, Oklahoma

Mary Colburn Commers

Fun in Films

"Tragic flaw," "recognition scene," "reversal." These terms and similar ones are used meaningfully by our students, who as sophomores study a unit on classical, Elizabethan, and modern tragedy and as seniors a unit on revenge tragedy. When questioned about concepts of comedy, however, students have demonstrated little perception. Thus, for a year I had been considering that our curriculum might include materials on humor and comedy. Then came a summer NDEA institute and Sister Bede Sullivan's course in film study. She gave me the answer to my problem: a three-week unit presenting aspects of comedy through film comedy shorts.

The opportunity for teaching my film comedy unit appeared when our department participated in an English elective program with sophomores, juniors, and seniors registered together in thirteen-day courses which they themselves had chosen. A film-study class, offered five periods during the day, was one of these elective courses.

Emphasis on grades in the film-study class was minimized, with only one project required. Students had wide choice of projects: keeping journals of their evaluations of the films in the unit, reading on history of film comedy or on comic stars, making story boards or collages with humorous themes, preparing bulletin board displays or models of comic stars or comic techniques. A number of students shot their own short comedy films. Several who had in earlier English classes rarely prepared assigned written compositions readily drew sketches of their favorite film comedians.

Course content included wide variety from ultramodern shorts like "Time Piece" and "Hypothese Beta" to Charlie Chaplin's "Gold Rush" and Mack Sennett's Keystone Kops. Students were quick to perceive sharp contrast between modern film comedy and early film comedy, with its traditional slapstick. "Fun Factory" served as an effective summary of early film techniques, since it covers highlights from Mack Sennett's

studio with the Keystone Kops, the Bathing Beauties, and individual stars such as Chaplin, Marie Dressler, Mabel Normand, Harry Langdon, Ben Turpin, and others. The chase, pie throwing, and fall-apart "tin lizzies" gave students an overview of the slapstick characterizing early film comedies. On the other hand, students noted today's emphasis on bitter humor in "Two Men and a Wardrobe" and sensed the stress on the pressures of contemporary society with its technology, as portrayed in "Time Piece" and "Hypothese Beta."

After viewing "Pigs," students recognized a basic element of comedy, the application of animal traits to human beings. A day in the life of a pig parallels a day in the life of a man. The humorous appeal of all animal comedy depends primarily on the picturing of human characteristics in animals. Later in the unit students saw further application of this principle in the filmed version of Ionesco's "Rhinoceros" where people, having lost their individuality, become members of the rhinoceros herd.

Laurel and Hardy films offer unlimited opportunity for discussion of comic techniques. Students mastered the concept of juxtaposition as a comic device when they saw the round-faced, overpowering bully Oliver Hardy with his thin-faced, timid companion, Stan Laurel. Another technique, defiance of natural laws, is illustrated when Laurel carries a very long wooden plank, one end of it resting on his shoulder while the plank stretches out interminably, or when Hardy balances his weight on a miniature paint bucket. The use of extended time for comic effects appears in "The Finishing Touch" when a nurse punches Laurel in the stomach; Laurel pauses, picks up his hat, puts it back on his head, then cries like a baby. Later when bricks are hurled at the bowler hats of Laurel and Hardy, the hats drop off their heads some time after impact.

Repetition as a comic device is seen in the word "Help" being spoken at intervals throughout "Time Piece" and in "Two Men and a Wardrobe" when the men repeatedly set down the wardrobe and then again pick it up to carry it on to the next encounter with man's inhumanity.

Students already familiar with irony from their earlier study of tragedy showed pride in finding a similar use of irony in comedy in the film version of James Thurber's "The Unicorn in the Garden," when the wife rather than the berated husband is taken away to the "booby hatch," or in "The Pharmacist" when W.C. Fields after forbidding his daughter to see her boyfriend again rewards him for catching a robber in the drugstore. Irony is evident also in the French film "The Chicken" when a chicken thought to be a hen turns out to be a rooster.

A further characteristic of comedy, the happy ending, is illustrated in both early and modern film shorts. Charlie Chaplin's "Gold Rush," the

unanimous choice of critics from forty countries as the greatest all-time film comedy, ends merrily when Charlie's gold-mining companion, Mack Swain, finds his lost mine. "Golden Fish," winner of the Cannes Film Festival Award in 1959, also has a happy ending when the villainous alley cat returns a small boy's gold fish to his bowl.

"Golden Fish," filmed without narration, also provides opportunity for a discussion of the uses of pantomime, as does Robert Benchley's "Night at the Movies," when Benchley imitates the difficulties of finding a seat in a dark movie theater.

Comedy thrives on incongruities, and film comedy shorts abound in them: Charlie Chaplin's bowler hat and over-sized shoes, Buster Keaton's dead-pan expression in catastrophe, W.C. Fields's mad chases in situations that demand caution, and Robert Benchley's finding himself on stage in a chorus line.

Further techniques of parody, exaggeration, and the distorted use of language are clarified through audio-visual screen images. The sound track of "Calypso Singer" is a parody of Harry Belafonte's "Day-O." Exaggeration is apparent in Buster Keaton's "She's Oil Mine" when the heroine escapes the villain by hiding in a huge pipe and when the plumber says as he reads the first page of *Gone with the Wind*, "I thought I'd finish this book before he interrupted me." The use of language alone to provide humor appears in "Jail Keys Made Here." To Dave Brubeck's piano accompaniment, actual photographs of billboards and signs flash on the screen, signs and slogans containing mixed metaphors and amusing contradictions.

By the final days of the unit students were voluntarily searching for and identifying illustrations of comic techniques; they had unknowingly mastered many of the concepts that underlie all humor. My objective, to teach some familiarity with comedy, had been realized, but perhaps even more satisfying to me were the interest, motivation, and pleasure observed among my students. Many asked if they could repeat the course second semester. Furthermore, the librarian reported a flood of requests for the essays of James Thurber and Robert Benchley, and the one available copy of Edwin A. Abbott's short novel, *Flatland*, upon which the film is based, passed through many hands. Perhaps, however, the following note clipped to the paper of a boy who is a fine gymnast but an indifferent scholar was the most convincing proof of all that our fun in film unit was worthwhile.

> I enjoyed the 13 day session of film study very much. I am presently reading about Chaplin and plan on furthering my exploration through reading books. I have only completed 2 books in my life and now I am willingly reading for pleasure.

Can any English teacher ask for a more gratifying testimonial to the success of her teaching?

Lincoln Southeast High School
Lincoln, Nebraska

Books Helpful in Preparation of the Unit

Agee, James. *On Film.* New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1967.
Feyen, Sharon, ed. *Screen Experience: An Approach to Film.* Dayton, Ohio: George A. Pflaum, 1969.
Halliwell, Leslie. *The Filmgoers' Companion.* New York: Hill & Wang, 1967.
Kerr, Walter. *Tragedy and Comedy.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967.
Knight, Arthur. *The Liveliest Art.* New York: Mentor, 1957.
Lahue, K. C. *World of Laughter:* The Motion Picture Comedy Short. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966.
——— and Terry Brewer. *Kops and Custards:* The Legend of Keystone Films. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968.
Mallery, David. *The School and the Art of Motion Pictures.* Boston: National Association of Independent Schools, 1964.
Robinson, David. *Great Funnies.* New York: Dutton, 1969.
———. *Buster Keaton.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969.
Schilling, Bernard N. *The Comic Spirit.* Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1965.
Sheridan, Marion C., et al. *The Motion Picture and the Teaching of English.* New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts for NCTE, 1965.
Sypher, Wylie, ed. *Comedy.* Garden City: Anchor, 1956.
Taylor, Robert Lewis. *W. C. Fields:* His Follies and Fortunes. New York: New American Library, 1967.

Films Used in the Unit

"Calypso Singer," Contemporary
"The Chicken," Mass Media
"The Finishing Touch," Audio Film Center
"Flatland," Contemporary
"Fun Factory," Sterling Educational Films
"Gold Rush," Swank
"Golden Fish," Mass Media
"Hurry, Hurry," ROA
"Hypothese Beta," McGraw-Hill
"Jail Keys Made Here," Contemporary
"Night at the Movies," Swank
"The Pharmacist," Audio Film Center
"Pigs," Churchill Films
"Rhinoceros," Mass Media
"She's Oil Mine," ROA
"Time Piece," Mass Media
"Two Men and a Wardrobe," Mass Media
"The Unicorn in the Garden," Brandon
"The Violinist," Brandon

Betsey Creekmore

The Tape Essay: Resource for English

The process of dehumanization, the creation of a uniform product, is frequently the end of freshman composition courses. The problem confronting the teacher in freshman English is that of training the student to express his individual and critical opinions in acceptable prose, but attention to form all too frequently outweighs attention to interest or individuality.

A sop to individuality is often the teacher's use of a rhetoric book containing "relevant" essays geared to interest the student and deal with his problems. Today's student, however, can easily be dehumanized by this very effort to interest him. Instructors in freshman English appear to have overlooked the fact that relevance is also relative; unless the relevant topic can be made relative to a particular student, he will be left feeling that his views, his experience, his ideas are unimportant.

One way to narrow, if not completely to bridge, the relevancy-relativity gap is to construct "tape essays" which gear any issue to a particular city, a particular university, and a particular group of students. A Mayor cannot speak to every section of freshman English, but he can usually give up ten minutes to answer questions to which he has previously been asked to prepare brief answers, if the instructor takes the tape recorder to his office; a student who will not tell a class about a "bad trip" may well be willing to describe it on tape if his name is not used; the student who is prejudiced may be willing to air his views briefly on tape; the student who feels that persons are prejudiced against him may also be more willing to speak on tape, with the proviso of anonymity.

A tape essay is not merely an interview or a recorded lecture; it is a carefully planned program which includes speeches, songs, essays, poems, and whatever else is germane to the topic. These items are introduced and conjoined by spoken continuity provided on the tape by the instructor. The instructor can also explain any selection or comment he finds abstruse.

In making tape essays, I have found that a variety of voices holds

attention, although having the continuity consistently provided by the voice of the instructor appears to appeal to the students both as a familiar voice and as an aid to understanding the divisions and progression of the tape. The most satisfactory combination of items has been that which was the most varied. A program of several two- or three-minute interviews; two or three poems, student-written if possible; one short essay; and songs taped from records currently popular on the university campus has worked extremely well in providing attention-getting changes of pace, especially after a brief introductory definition and analysis of the issue to be illustrated by the tape essay.

It might be argued that using tape essays again dehumanizes the student by making him a passive recipient of information, albeit information and experience with which he is familiar. This criticism would indeed be true if the tape essay were used as an end in itself. The tape essay, however, functions as a starting point through which the student may begin to recognize the value of the situation as he relates to it.

I have found that the use of the tape essay in freshman composition courses has four distinct advantages in beginning a process of humanization.

1. The student is no longer reading or listening to the words of city officials, college administrators, students, etc., who are geographically or situationally removed from him; he cannot slough off the issue as not applying to his situation.
2. The tape essay, when constructed to last for the entire class period, does not force the student to take an immediate stand in class discussion but provides excellent stimulus for writing his reactions and for considered reactions at the next class meeting.
3. Since the well-constructed tape essay presents several viewpoints and embodies several contentions about any issue, the student has enough material to work with in organizing his thoughts for writing or discussion.
4. The continuity of the fragile rapport between teacher and class is preserved by not importing experts but by having the tape presented by the instructor.

That students have responded well is evident by overall improvement of thought and form in their themes and class discussions. They have, with very few exceptions, spent more time organizing themes and rebuttals or comparisons to tape essays. They have consistently provided better substantiation for their points, and have become more willing to listen to

others and to draw from their own personal experiences as evidence for their contentions.

The tape essay is not about to replace the instructor in the classroom. The questions and discussions which have arisen as a result of the essays have demonstrated a considerable lack of understanding of issues and information about which students are generally thought to be well informed. When the issue is presented on their home territory, they are no longer able to assume that if they were in New York or Chicago they would understand, but since they are not, they need not understand. The essays have opened avenues for discussion which were not being opened by relevant but not relative material. They have allowed for discussions of rhetoric and principles of speaking, writing and arguing which are extremely difficult to illustrate by using a standard text. They have also, happily enough, increased awareness of the necessity for cogency and precision in diction and exposition.

It has taken, on the average, about six hours to make a fifty-minute tape essay. This estimate includes the time spent writing to and interviewing public officials, police officers, drug addicts, students, active members of civic and professional groups, and college administrators, as well as time spent in preparing the continuity and the actual taping. I have found sufficient improvement in student writing and discussion to consider the time well spent.

The ease of taping with portable cassette recorders, and an offer to allow the person being recorded to hear the entire tape before its use, has made it relatively easy to gain interviews and help. Students themselves have frequently taken the recorder to interview a student unknown to me.

I do not suggest that the tape essay is the answer to the problem of dehumanization. I do suggest, however, that it can be used as an effective tool in the process. The very fact that the trouble has been taken is indicative to students that a teacher cares more about him than his tuition.

Old Dominion University
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Shirley McCammon

From Collages to Poetry

The innovative English teacher is constantly in search of new tools to reach that unmotivated student. I was searching for just such a means when I observed some collages done by our art department. One specific collage captured my attention. The brilliant hues and colors which at first appeared as a massive blur blended to focus on a central theme. Slogans and related words were superimposed upon fragments of pictures of Buicks, Fords, Volkswagens, and hot rods. As I observed the intermingling of the visual imagery with the verbal, the thought occurred to me, What interests the average human being? Himself! Since literature motivates the individual toward self discovery by integrating all aspects of life, I decided to utilize the versatility of this medium by assigning my seniors a collage entitled "I Am." Perhaps this would encourage them to ask themselves, "Who am I? Where am I going? Where did I come from?"

When the assignment was made, the usual questions of size, types of pictures, and permission for this or that were asked. Explaining that this was not to be my creation but theirs took more ingenuity than any other aspect of this unit. This particular class needed the suggestion that a male including a picture of a female would not be indicating femininity, but rather that every man needs a woman to complete his world. Any image could be placed on this collage that literally or symbolically represented a part of their lives. The student placed his name on the back of the collage to keep observers from prejudice.

Excitement ran high the day the collages were turned in. Everyone was curious about who was who. Placing the collages on the bulletin boards, on the wall, and along the blackboard kept the students (and the teacher) from discovering the author. Each student moved around the room trying to decipher why this picture or that word appeared on the collage and what student in *this* classroom would ever consider *that* a part of his makeup. After notes and questions had been jotted down, we discussed each collage. It is not easy to admit you are human, but I wanted

to discover along with my students who represented himself in *this* manner. The only way to do this was for me not to peek either. We discussed a particular collage which had a bright yellow circle, similar to the sun, for a center. Perhaps this represented a part of the student which is energy not yet discovered. One student said that perhaps it could suggest the eternal life force within the individual. Another suggested that it might be love for all mankind, since the geometric form of the circle which has no beginning or end could be representative of the eternal nature of love as a concept while the sun imagery might represent the burning force of love. We discussed the individual experience of love. Could love be annihilated, or could it be diverted into another channel by finding a different receiver? There were two possible aspects of "burning" symbolized by the sun imagery; therefore, we contrasted the beneficial attribute with the destructive attribute. We realized the artist may not have consciouly placed the symbol there for all of these reasons, but we were applying to our collages T.S. Eliot's statement about poetry: "What a poem [collage] means is as much what it means to others as what it means to the author." The interpretations, with the variety of responses, in several instances gave the artist more insight into himself. This introspection was, after all, the objective.

Another creator represented himself with a brick wall and some floor tile, along with some brighter images. Surprisingly enough, the students had little difficulty identifying the boy. He had been walked on in several love affairs and therefore shut part of himself away from everyone, including himself. This particular creator seemed relieved to express his inner thoughts so that he was recognized. He quickly acknowledged his creation with a shy grin and, "Yep! That's me!" He has been more responsive since then, not only in class but also to his classmates outside the classroom.

Considering this as a prewriting assignment, we decided to see what we could do with this art form. Each took his collage and wrote a minimum of ten sentences in a column, each sentence beginning with "I am." Moving around the classroom, I noticed that several of the lists would make excellent poems. After a suggestion that the "I am's" be marked out, the students rearranged the lists until there was either a pyramid style with the summary at the end or an inverted pyramid style with the most important thought first. Then it was time for the announcement: "You have just created the first draft of a poem." Looks of astonisment and exclamations of surprise filled the room. They could not believe writing poetry could be this easy.

No, we did not discover a Robert Frost or an e.e. cummings, but we

did break down some barriers. The first barrier to fall was the typical teenager's, "Nobody understands me." As a classmate seemed awed at the author's insight or surprised at this side of a peer that the observer never suspected, each student felt a sense of individual accomplishment. The second barrier broken was a fear of writing poetry.

These rough drafts of their poems were duplicated so the group could work together at refining them. Another teacher volunteered to assist with the reworking of the original lists. It became questionable in some instances whether the original or the reworking had clearer imagery.

Original

On fire with desire,
A connisseur of the dark and
ravishing,
Tired, down and out,
An escapist.

Old fashioned,
Young,
Gay,
Emotional,
Little girlish,
Feminine,
Loving,
Religious,
I am in love with life.

Reworked

An escapist is a connisseur of
the ravishing dark;
Now, on fire with desire;
Then, tired, down and out.

I may be old fashioned,
But I'm young and gay
And little girlish
In a feminine way.

Tender and giving,
In love with life,
I hope to make
A loving wife.

We did learn to use economy of language and to use more poignant arrangements.

Popular athlete
Under 21
Watchful?
A husband?
I like girls' shapely legs!
Hot cars turn me on.
A member of Dodge Scat Pack
Beep! Beep!
I'm gone.
Believe in love and peace,
I don't want wild things to cease.

A happy man,
A lover of dancing,
A music lover,
A learning man,
A peaceful but curious man.

I believe in love and peace,
But I don't want wild things to cease.
Hot cars turn me on;
I'm a member of Dodge Scat Pack.
Beep! Beep!
I'm gone.

Happy lover of
Dances, music, learning.
I am peaceful, curious.

Some of the students were more soul searching than others.

I am inhibited to degrees,
Filled with mixed emotions,
Unhappy at times, full of life,
Lonely and popular.
I am one and the same.
I am unique;
I am ME!

Inhibited, filled with emotions,
Unhappy at times,
Though full of life.
Lonely yet popular,
I am uniquely ME.

As I watched the interaction of these imaginations, I became aware of how negligent I had been in the classroom by not utilizing the visual imagery that the mass media have infused in every phase of our communication system. Only through the freeing of this imagination can we lead the student to the humanness that we seek in our contemporary world.

Evangel College
Springfield, Missouri

Allen Berger

Gordon Sliwinski

One day Gordon Sliwinski silently walked out of the classroom, into the hall, and slowly proceeded to smash the tightly-screwed coat hooks off the wall, one by one, until his bare fist was bloody.

Gordon was sort of a quiet boy. In our school we were seated according to the marks we made on our last report card. Gordon sat in the last seat in the last row next to the radiator.

The seats we sat in were bolted to the floor. Gordon could see the back of everybody's head. Those who sat in the front seat of each row could examine the cracks on the blackboard.

Once in a while Gordon would raise his hand and wave his arm, but the teachers always called on somebody else. Sometimes I wondered if they couldn't remember his name, or if they couldn't see him in the back of the room, or if perhaps they just didn't know he was there.

One day, though, in English class in seventh grade we were "learning" poetry. The whole class had to memorize "Trees"—we had to know the jargon and even the punctuation marks as Joyce Kilmer or his printer recorded them.

We were startled when the teacher called Gordon to go to the blackboard and write the first two lines. He made the long walk from the back of the room and slowly wrote those indelible lines, misspelling the word *poem.*

"What's that you spelled?"

"Poem," said Gordon, a little sheepishly.

"That is not *poem*! That is *peom.* PEom you've got there. The word is *poem.* POem. Write it correctly!"

Gordon wrote it correctly.

That happened in seventh grade. Toward the end of eighth grade Gordon learned that he would not be going on to high school with his friends. *He had failed.* It was then that he made his attack on the symbolic coat hooks.

That was twenty years ago in a school in a good section of a city in upstate New York.

Classroom practices have changed in twenty years. They are not quite so dehumanizing.

Instead of seating children by their report card marks we group them by their ability.

Instead of overlooking individual differences we merely speak about them as we go about using uniform books and giving uniform exams and asking the same uniform low level questions of all in the classroom.

We talk about the need to have an audience for oral communication and then, when reading a play, we have those without parts sit with their books open, reading along—even though we know from observation and thirty years of research what the good readers and the poor readers are *really* doing.

We talk about the need for clearly defined objectives and purposes and then, without paying any heed whatsoever to presenting clear or meaningful objectives, we assign students to read pages 80 to 100 for homework.

We chatter about tailoring the curriculum to meet the needs and interests of the children. But, in actuality, except for a few token nods in their direction, what we do reveals that we are really more concerned about our own interests. For it is the rare school or system that invites students to participate in the selection of the books they will use as consumers.

And we simply ignore the yawning gap that exists between the magazines boys and girls like to read and the magazines purchased for school libraries.

The curriculum has become more masculine now; increased attention is given to little boys.

But we are quite selective in the giants that we let boys and girls meet —and while we are now agreed that all children should be familiar with black writers and heroes, we are not yet prepared to accord similar respect to Mexican writers or Indian heroes or to the giants of all minority groups.

Today there are more teachers who, with classroom lights low, incense burning, children seated in a circle, make a happening out of reading poetry.

But there are still many who are not concerned about creating an atmosphere conducive to learning poetry or anything else. In their atmosphere-polluted classrooms the children no longer sit in chairs bolted to the floor, but their thoughts are bolted down as they still sit quietly in rows, one behind the other, un-reading unmeaningful poems.

Now we have decided that perhaps the one-room schoolhouse wasn't so bad after all and have ungraded schools and student-tutors and para-professionals.

Yes, indeed, there have been a great many changes in English classrooms and schools during the past twenty years. Some of these have been physical. Schools have knocked down walls, set up modular scheduling, literally made the library the heart of the building. Yet some walls, perhaps the most vital and impeding, remain standing.

One of the more subtle physical changes, though, relates to the coat hooks that used to protrude from the walls into the corridors. They are gone in most schools. What this means is that all the Gordon Sliwinskis must find—and *are* finding—other ways of releasing their pent-up frustrations and silent violence after years and years of neglect, indignity, and mutilation.

The University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

GENE STANFORD

Individualized Response to the Short Story

Study of fiction has traditionally comprised reading the literary work, discussing in class its various aspects, such as plot, character, theme, setting, imagery, and symbolism, and then—if the teacher feels a writing assignment is necessary—choosing one of these elements and toiling over a paper on somthing inspiring like "The Use of the Color Green in *Lord of the Flies*." The value of this approach for some students cannot be questioned, if for no more reason than that they will have to do it in college (though this has never really been explained to my satisfaction).

But for a large number of our students, I venture to say a majority, there is not always a need for them all to read the same work and discuss it together or to write the types of scholarly papers we require of the college-bound.

I have had great success in a two- or three-week unit on short stories by making available to students a large number of stories to choose from and a long list of possible things to do with the stories. It is easy to supplement a basic anthology—I particularly like Boynton and Mack's *Introduction to the Short Story* (Hayden)—with inexpensive paperback collections such as *Ten Top Stories, Twenty Grand Short Stories, Ten Modern American Short Stories* (all Bantam), or *Point of Departure* (Dell) which cost only from fifty to sixty cents. From this wide range of possibilities, students can be asked to read at least ten stories—or five or thirty, depending on time and ability. (If you shudder at such lack of direction, then require five stories that you consider essential to the development of literary tastes and let students choose the others.) Give them a list of possible activities based on the one below—you will surely think of others to include—and explain that they are to choose which activities they wish to complete, with a minimum of two (or three, or ten) required:

1. Write a T.V. script for one of the stories you have read. Either turn the script in or assemble a cast and read it to the class.

2. Imagine you are one of the characters in a story you read and write a diary about your thoughts and feelings and the events in your life.
3. Write a letter to a character in a story you have read, giving him advice. For example, how would you suggest to Daisy ("A Start in Life") that the Kruses are not being cruel but that her problem lies within herself?
4. Put a character from a story you have read into a totally new setting of your invention and tell how he would react in those circumstances. Can you imagine, for example, how Daisy would react if suddenly elected Miss Teenage America?
5. Write your own short story.
6. Write a short story and tell the class how you did it, why you chose the various characters, the setting, the particular point of view, etc.
7. Rewrite a passage from a story you've read from as many points of view as possible.
8. Compare two characters—either two from the same story, or one from each of two stories.
9. Read several stories dealing with the same theme. See the teacher for suggestions.
10. Spend all of your time reading. Read as many stories as you like and submit a list to the teacher, including your personal reaction to each.
11. Discuss a story that you liked (or disliked) with the teacher. Or with the class. Or with another student.
12. Compare a story you liked to one you disliked, explaining why.
13. Compose an imaginary encounter between two characters from different stories. What, for example, would be the result of Paul ("Paul's Case") being trapped on a blind date with Daisy ("A Start in Life")?
14. Don Wolfe has stated that "a short story is a study of two parts of the same hero, one part of him at war with another." Demonstrate how this is true in stories you have read. OR: Describe a time in your own life when two parts of you were pulled in opposite directions.
15. Choose a character and tell what you would have done in his place, giving reasons for your decision.
16. Describe a character completely. Collect your data by filling in a chart with three columns headed "Detail from the Story," "What Detail Reveals About the Character," and "Method of Revealing Character" (what he says, what he does, what others say about him, etc.).
17. After determining the theme of a particular story, attempt to prove that it is a valid or invalid way of viewing the world. For example, if the theme of "By the Waters of Babylon" is that human beings can cause their own destruction through their insatiable curiosity, cite evidence from your own knowledge of the world that proves this true or false.
18. Write a new ending for a story you have read. Consider what other changes must be made in the story to make your ending logical and how your ending would alter the overall meaning of the story.
19. Is there a character in any story you have read who is similar to someone you know in real life? Describe this person, pointing out the similarities to the fictional character.
20. Explain which character *you* are most similar to.

21. Assemble a collection of newspaper clippings on which short stories might be based, explaining how you would develop them into a story.
22. Imagine yourself to be the writer of an advice-to-the-lovelorn column (such as Ann Landers). Compose letters from several characters stating the dilemmas they face and furnish an advice-filled reply to each.
23. Illustrate a story you liked with photographs—taken by you or clipped from magazines—or with a drawing or painting by you.
24. Construct a collage to illustrate the theme of a story you enjoyed.
25. Set the theme of a story to music, written by you or adapted from other sources.
26. Make a film of a story.
27. Make a sequence of slides illustrating a story. Combine them with film. Or taped music. Or both.
28. Express the theme of a story through a dance you have devised yourself.
29. Spend a day being a character that you particularly liked or disliked. Describe the experience.
30. Devise your own activity, subject to the teacher's approval.

How, you may demand, can I possibly give the same grade to a student who merely writes an Ann Landers letter as I do to a student who painstakingly constructs a short story of his own? Is it fair for a student who does an excellent job of telling how he's similar to Charlie Gordon to get the same *A* as one who does an excellent job of grappling with the theme of "Young Man Axelbrod?" If you are convinced that grades are important, you will undoubtedly manage some way of weighting the values of the various activities so that the "harder" ones carry more credit —and you will thereby ruin the finest feature of the experience.

On the other hand, if you feel that the student's personal response to the story is what matters, and that we each have our preferences as to how we want to express that response, you will see that each of the activities is of equal value and no statistical gymnastics will be necessary. What counts is that the individual student has been given the chance to read what he can like and to deal with it in ways that are uniquely his.

Boulder, Colorado

Jean McAndrews

Tapes and Interviews

This year, as I was previewing the filmstrip and record "An Interview with Henry David Thoreau," two ideas occurred to me: that Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* would lend itself well to this treatment, containing so much factual information about his times and about Franklin's opinions on so many subjects; and that students could interview each other in the same fashion.

I

My classes had just read and discussed the *Autobiography*, so it seemed opportune. After my classes had seen the Thoreau filmstrip, I asked my second period class if they would like to tape an interview with Benjamin Franklin instead of taking a quiz on his *Autobiography*. I had a sort of sneaky, hidden motive in singling out this class: They hadn't been responding satisfactorily, and I hoped to stimulate their interest by making them feel they were special. They chose to make the tape.

I explained that the time for our production would have to be limited to the two days that my other classes would be taking the quiz and going over the corrected papers, so it would have to be well-planned and executed. We held nominations for the boy they thought should take the part of Franklin. (They didn't choose the boy *I* thought would be best, but I found their choice was a good one.) The loser was given the consolation prize of being the narrator, who would introduce and close the interview. Another boy volunteered to find and bring to class some appropriate music on his home tape recorder to begin and end our recording. I asked two of my best writers to do the introduction, a brief account of Franklin's life and accomplishments, and the closing, a resumé of his importance to his country. I told the rest of the group to bring to class the next day a question they would like to ask Franklin, with the answer copied verbatim from his *Autobiography*. Each student would ask a question. I

warned them there was one question they couldn't ask: "Why did they call you the Water-American when you were in England?" (I was afraid I would have thirty-four Water-American questions if I didn't.)

The next day the students brought in their questions and answers, and we decided the order in which they should be asked, numbered them and assigned the numbers to the proper person. The introduction was number one, and the the conclusion was thirty-four. There was just about enough time left in the period to determine where to place the recorder for Benjamin Franklin and his interviewers, and the tape unit with the instrumental music.

That night I took the numbered questions and answers home and typed a master plan in triplicate, indicating the music, the narrator's speeches (introduction and conclusion), each student's question according to its number, and Benjamin Franklin's replies. One copy was for the narrator, one for "Benjamin Franklin" and one for me. In the meantime I had made arrangements to borrow a tape recorder from the language laboratory.

When the class arrived the next morning, it took only a few minutes to hand back the students' questions and answers, line them up numerically, and place Benjamin Franklin and his microphone and recorder, and the narrator and the home-recorder with the taped music (Cesar Franck's Concerto in D minor) where the interviewers could file past and ask their questions. There would be just enough time in the period to complete the interview, as the finished tape would run about thirty-five minutes.

I should like to be able to report that everything went smoothly and we met our time schedule, but a number of technical problems carried us into a second day of production. The next day we tried again, and this time everything went off without a hitch.

Benjamin Franklin had come off the page and become a human being. And the cooperative effort of producing this tape gave the class a cohesiveness it had lacked. The word got around: another class has asked to make a tape of *Yankee from Olympus*.

II

The second effective practice involved student interviews. The plan was to have each student interview another, writing up the interview as a composition assignment, and then, in turn, *be* interviewed by still another student, so that at least two contacts per student would occur. To eliminate students interviewing their buddies, I numbered slips of paper with the number of students in the room, and each one pulled a number. The odd

numbers interviewed the next highest even number for fifteen minutes (1 interviewed 2, etc.), then the even numbers interviewed the next odd number (2 interviewed 3) for fifteen minutes, taking notes to be used for writing their article.

In preparation for this period of interviewing, I asked the students to read an interview in a sports magazine, movie magazine, or newspaper, and jot down some questions which seemed to bring out the personality of the subject or give some insight into his character. These we listed on the blackboard as a guide for the student interviewers. Then I read aloud to the class the beginning paragraphs of some interviews I had gathered from different magazines, and the class discussed what the author had accomplished in his introduction—aroused interest, gave background information, etc. Next we looked at concluding remarks and analyzed what made an effective ending. The models and our discussion were enough to get them started on a kind of writing they had not done before.

After the interviews were written, each "subject" proofed the article about himself to catch any errors or misstatements before the papers were handed in. I read and commented on the papers and handed them back to be made into a final copy, which I taped on a big blackboard in the back of the room, for several days the center of attraction for most of the juniors in the school. One interview with a foreign exchange student was published in the school newspaper.

I think I accomplished my objectives: to pull the class into a tighter, more closely knit, harmonious group.

North Pocono Junior-Senior High School
Moscow, Pennsylvania

Guy DiBiasio

Brainstorming: Facilitating Writing and Developing Creative Potential

Though much has been said about the teaching of writing, no clear method has emerged as the most successful. Researchers have suggested that extensive correction of essays, teaching formal grammar, writing a theme a week and other variations of these approaches do not, in fact, make better writers. Some suggestions have been made, however, which to me appear to be pointing in the direction of improving writing. One of these suggestions, made by Janet Emig in the Fall 1967 issue of *Research in the Teaching of English*, is that the ego-strength of the writer, usually ignored, is an important factor in the writing process.

Daniel Fader supports this point in *Hooked on Books*,[1] suggesting that teachers be more interested in returning essays with written praise of the favorable aspects rather than with written comments only about what is wrong. Certainly the latter can be destructive to the sensitive ego of a teenager who is experiencing difficult educational and social adjustment. It has also been suggested by several researchers that students can learn from each other. James Moffett points out that in the teaching of writing, students should have an opportunity to exchange papers, thus helping to facilitate "learning from each other."

The search for a successful "method" of teaching writing—that is, a method which will result in significant, meaningful growth in the ability to write clearly, concisely, and with grammatical correctness—appears to be leading in the direction of group work and the creation of an atmosphere free from the threat of external evaluation, a climate emphasizing the importance of self or internal evaluation. The most important consideration in the procedure outlined here is the ability of the teacher to create an environment characterized by Carl Rogers as providing psycho-

[1]Daniel Fader and E. B. McNeil, *Hooked on Books* (New York: Putnam's, 1968).

logical safety and psychological freedom. The latter means accepting each individual for what he is, providing a climate in which external evaluation is absent or at least not a threat. The former means creating an atmosphere of freedom of symbolic expression, which should not be construed as indulgence or softness but rather as *permission to be free.*

The method suggested by these considerations is based on the technique called "brainstorming," a term first used in 1939 by Alex Osborne to describe a group approach to the solution of a specific problem. Brainstorming, individual or group, is problem-centered and is characterized by the production of a quantity of ideas, deferred judgment, the acceptance of any idea regardless of how way out it appears, and striving for combination and improvement of the ideas. The method can best be illustrated by an example. This approach to writing may center on fiction, nonfiction, or newspapers used in the English program. For the purposes of this example *The Diary of Young Girl* by Anne Frank is used. The problem for this brainstorming example was suggested in *Hooked on Books.* The procedure:

1. Groups of four to six students are formed. A recorder may be appointed by the teacher or by the group, or each member may jot down his own ideas.
2. The brainstorming problem is presented. Several possibilities:
    a. In what way is Anne's statement, "For in its innermost depths youth is lonelier than old age," pertinent to your own life?
    b. What would happen if we allowed the development of hate groups such as the Nazis in the United States?
    c. Are the words *prejudice, scapegoat,* and *anti-Semitism* applicable to our society today?
    d. How can the current world situation be compared with the world situation at the time Anne wrote her diary?
    e. Anne states "the little man"—the average citizen—shares the politician's guilt for the war. How can the average citizen of today make his opinion known in matters of national interest?

    These questions are broad and thought-provoking and are, of course, valuable only if the book has been carefully read by students and if students are, in fact, interested in the problems raised by these questions. The study guide in *Hooked on Books* was prepared by Ann Farnell for junior high school students. Obviously, many other literary works or other fictional types which appeal to different tastes and which are suitable for different abilities may be used.
3. The problem now becomes the basis for brainstorming and students try to come up with as many ideas as they can. The teacher is available to answer questions, to facilitate the brainstorming, or to guide the brainstorming session as needed. As students brainstorm, they try their ideas on other students, and if an open environment has been created by the teacher, wide-ranging ideas may flow freely. After one or two periods of idea production,

during which time no attempt has been made at evaluation (the principle of deferred judgment), the ideas produced are critically examined *by the students* and combinations and improvements are sought.

4. Each student can now write a preliminary draft, conferring with other group members and with the teacher on matters of logic, clarity of expression, usage, and grammar. Finally, when the student feels he is ready to have his essay evaluated, he may submit it to his teacher for critical evaluation.
5. At this point the teacher may make several options available to the student:
   a. Evaluate the essay and return it with a grade.
   b. Make suggestions for improvement and grade the essay after improvements have been made.
   c. Have the essay read to the class, with students expected to make constructive comments.
   d. Submit the essay to a panel of student readers (this duty could be rotated among the different brainstorming groups), with the teacher reviewing the student evaluations.
   e. A final possibility is for the teacher to allow the student to indicate if he *wants* the essay to be graded. This point, as well as others, is based on E. Paul Torrance's recommendation that students need to be given opportunities for practice *without evaluation* if creative potential is to be developed.

It should be stressed at this point that teachers should not become overly concerned about the errors which are bound to occur in student writing. It is my attitude and experience that if students can be really turned on or can be motivated to want to communicate their ideas and attitudes, they will evaluate their own material (with some guidance and help from teacher and peers) and strive on their own for improvement in writing.

The mention of grades may appear inconsistent with the procedure described, and certainly a teacher who is in a school system which has abandoned the practice of assigning grades is among a fortunate minority. However, most school systems still require teachers to grade students and the options listed above are simply in keeping with the prevailing practice —which, fortunately, can be humanized to the extent the teacher is willing.

It is apparent that creating an open environment cannot be an occasional activity of the teacher but must involve a basic commitment to a philosophy of education which emphasizes the involvement of the student in a creative learning environment. Carl Rogers suggests certain assumptions which underlie the philosophy of education which permits psychological freedom and psychological safety:

1. Human beings have a natural potential for learning.
2. Meaningful learning takes place when the subject matter is perceived by the student as having relevance for his life.

3. Learning can be facilitated when the student is allowed to participate responsibly in the learning process.
4. The most pervasive and lasting learning is that which involves the whole person—the feelings as well as the intellect.
5. Creativity is best facilitated when self-criticism and self-evaluation are primary, rather than evaluation by others.
6. Learning the *process of learning*—a continuing openness to experience, an incorporation of the process of change into oneself—is the most socially useful learning.[2]

A brainstorming approach can be only as successful as the teacher's commitment to the procedure. It can offer protection to the sensitive egos of maturing adolescents as well as facilitate the development of creative potential. Researchers in creativity have suggested that the brainstorming approach can help to free students from conventional ways of doing things and solving problems, can help students restructure their perceptions of their environments in unusual ways, can free students from some of the conventions which hinder social progress—in short, can help students think and act creatively.

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[2]Adapted from Carl Rogers, *Freedom to Learn* (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1969), pp. 157-164.

Don Bott

Turning Them On to Themselves

Here in the boonies, like everywhere, the Establishment blows its cool if everything's not Mickey Mouse. Real movers stay loose, or they flame out. This is why any teach who doesn't live in a tree and really wants to teach and reach has to put the big E on, meanwhile shooting the straight skinny to students.

Three[1] all-time techniques that won't gross out the bosses really hang in there with students who've decided they want to make it with life. Let's call them (1) daydreaming, (2) description, and (3) discovery.

It's common that students have decided they're burnt out on education in general and English in particular; after an empty experience aceing cribs and flagging bears, it's easy to understand why some students choose to bag Zs in class rather than tune in to the teach's flak. Most can flake out with eyes still open.

A student who gets hung up in "class participation questions" with egg on his face from no slightest idea of what's going on is that wonderful missing link who provides a cool chance to bring in technique number one.

"Humm," says teach, cooling it. "Let's close our eyes. Yes, everybody."

Students, jolted[2] by this command from their noninvolvement, do so with reluctance. Youths are the real conservatives, and whenever SOP is

[1] "Three" is a number which, for some reason, works a peculiar magic in aesthetics in general and English in particular, but this number is here arbitrarily chosen, not because of any supposed intrinsic value, but because it effectively limits the scope of this work. If readers doubt that this paper represents work, they should try working with a non-adult vocabulary; also—it'll give some idea of the difficulties students face in formal writing.

[2] Not only students, but also educators, need to be jolted. This is the purpose of a humanities education. By introducing unrest into a closed system, changes are brought about and, hopefully, improvements are consequently made. It's hoped that this paper will provide such a jolt that reflection not reaction will come about.

abandoned, the students get shook. They resent departure from the way it's 'sposed to be, and after the technique teach will have to invent a tie-in with content so students may placidly return to noninvolvement.

"Now, let's take three deep breaths," commands teach. "Inhale . . . hold it. Exhale . . . inhale . . . exhale . . . inhale." In setting the communal rhythm, teach should avoid letting students turn blue.

"Oh, yes, exhale," continues teach. "Now, let's keep our eyes shut and imagine a movie screen."

Pause.

"Let's keep our eyes shut, and see ourselves on that screen. Imagine how you look on a movie screen. Imagine what kind of clothes you're wearing—"

Pause.

"What kind of things you have in your hands, if you have anything—"

Pause.

"See colors. This is a technicolor daydream, not a TV rerun."

Pause.

"Now, let's imagine something else, perhaps someone else, coming into your imaginary picture. Who or what is it? Let's imagine whatever it is with as much detail as we can."

"Now, let's all open our eyes. Let's take out a sheet of paper—do *not* put your name on it—and we're going to answer three questions." Thus ends the trip.

"Number one. What did you look like on the imaginary movie screen? Were you handsome or beautiful? Put 'yes' by number one on your paper if you were, and 'no' if you weren't.

"Number two. How were you dressed, and what did you have in your hands, if anything? What color were your clothes?"

A few students, if allowed, would pen a dissertation in answer to this question, so teach needs to cut it off after what seems enough time. Then—

"Number three. What was it that came into the picture that you were in? Describe it."

After another pause, teach orders the students to pass papers to the front, and then teacher and class survey (1) how many like themselves, and how many don't, (2) how those who like themselves have things in common in the second and third questions, (3) how those who don't like themselves have things in common, also, but differ radically from those who like themselves.

Students dig it the most because the technique is apparently non-

educational.[3] It's ungraded, which means there's no punishment for error. It's anonymous, which means there's no embarrassment at being different from everyone else. They don't think they learn anything.

Technique number two may be introduced as part of the usual bazz-fazz about description, descriptive writing, or whatever it happens to be called by the nerds who've laid it on us. Students are challenged to describe themselves (1) physically, (2) socially, and (3) categorically, using appropriate textbook methods, but not using their names.

Again, the anonymous papers are taken up, and—after careful previewing, and checking[4] with the individual student—two or three papers are read to the group. A guessing game usually follows, with the proud and sometimes bashful author participating, always to the hindrance of students trying to "win."

This technique brings together the individual student's idea of himself and the textbook version of how to go about describing something. Knowledge becomes incorporated and shows in later work. Other values will, as with the first technique, become apparent with application. Students wake up to the fact that they needn't be psychic door-huggers; they aren't burned as losers always. They might even decide English is a gut course they can smash. Any student who thinks this way shouldn't be put down; the teacher's attitude toward the student determines whether he'll come on strong or punt. Too many just let it go with a hook, as it is, and teach is left with only the grade-grubbers and the dorfs to talk at.

To talk at, rather than with, is gum-flapping that accomplishes nothing of lasting value. True, teach shows how smart he is, and grinds get their lists of things to memorize, but that's not where it's at. To tell students answers, to spoon-feed predigested crud to uncaring minds, is a job better done by a teaching machine, if it's worth doing at all.[5]

Technique number three involves the student in what becomes a source of enjoyment through growth. Technique number three encourages the process of intellectual discovery.

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[3] Educators who have entered the realm of self-image psychology might see something more, even with this brief description, and try-anything-once teachers will, in using it, arrive at some surprising answers, if they let the students arrive at the needed value judgments.

[4] Little or no coercion is needed in acquiring students' cooperation for this technique, since the student feels he is participating in a joke. Since the student whose paper is selected is most benefitted by the technique, care should be used in choosing the selections. The standard teacher's pets should be avoided, or much of the value of the technique will be wasted.

[5] Information without applicability, without inter-relationship, without joy in the finding and using, is empty. Educators must always be ready to show that *what* they teach—content—has a vital relationship to *who* they teach—people.

Teach should practice being thoughtful and/or bewildered, saying "Hummm . . . I don't know. That's interesting, isn't it?" The exploratory manner demands that teach be more than an answer-box while seeming less than an authority on his subject. This poses a strain on the self-control, since teach knows his stuff, usually, and is afraid to show ignorance, lest big E cut out the beans, but it's the only way to send students looking for information. They'll love teaching teach . . . and, more important, they'll love themselves for doing it.

Ranger High School
Ranger, Texas

Bonnie S. Titley

Students Grade Themselves in Writing

It was a brand new course. One section of the sophomore-level course called "Intermediate Writing" was assigned to me, and, as a member of the composition committee that had developed the course, I felt a special responsibility to do a good job from the faculty point of view. For the students, I felt an additional responsibility: they should not feel that they were, in any way, getting an underdeveloped course simply because they were the first crop through. The general objectives of the course were clear and I felt fairly confident that I could keep the students from feeling like guinea pigs.

But I couldn't stop there. I wanted to avoid the usual problems associated with grades. My contention was that in writing classes no grades should be given until the very end of the quarter when the final grade, required by the university, had to be assigned. My feeling was that a student's motivation to improve his writing should be based on evaluative comments and the intrinsic value of knowing he was communicating better, not on a higher-grade-than-last-time; that a student could want to improve his writing without necessarily making a higher grade. Experience also showed that, once students looked at grades, they did not take instructor comments as seriously as they should. The only explanation students themselves gave for this behavior was that the grade was the primary motivating force. There had to be a way to make writing somehow self-motivating, to make improvement its own reward. There had to be a way to eliminate inter-student competition and encourage individual effort.

My proposal to the director of composition was a simple one: no grades were to be assigned for any papers written. Every paper would be carefully evaluated and commented upon—occasionally by peers in addition to me. General evaluations would be made on content, form, expression, and mechanics by putting an *X* along the appropriate line on a newly-developed Evaluation Spectrums sheet. (See pages 42-43. The line for mechanics was printed on the back of the sheet in an attempt to

show that good mechanics are not good writing *per se* and yet to indicate that poor mechanics can adversely affect communication.) More specific evaluative comments would be included where appropriate. At the end of the quarter each student would negotiate with me for a final grade. Student agreement at the beginning of the quarter would be necessary even to begin the procedure.

The proposal was accepted.

The students agreed on the first day to all the conditions of the experiment and, with two notable exceptions, response throughout the quarter remained positive. A few faculty members looked on in snickering skepticism, saying "you will indeed be sorry that you have given up basic control of your classroom."

I was never sorry. Throughout the quarter, both the students and I experienced and expressed a more relaxed attitude and constructive approach to writing and evaluation—primarily because a grade was never the center of attention. Only the students' writing was being considered. Students looked closely at the evaluation spectrums and read my comments carefully. The number of student conferences was 200 percent above most other sections of the same course—and conferences in *all* sections were encouraged more than required. Students became quite effective as peer-critics and as self-critics—though they admitted that evaluating their own papers was a bit traumatic. At grade negotiation time, only the "two notable exceptions" made unrealistic evaluations of their work and unrealistic requests for grades.

The method for negotiating grades needs a short explanation. After the final paper had been submitted and evaluated, a personal conference was scheduled. My first question to each student was, "What grade do you believe you have earned?" The second question was, "Why?" In the process of answering these questions and discussing the answers, the student and I arrived at the grade to be assigned for the quarter's work. There were *no* failures and only one *D* in a class of twenty-three.

The Hawthorne effect might well have been operating. Even so, the approach was effective for this class. And more human and individual. The students learned more about writing, it appears—and I was able to teach more about writing.

Several of my colleagues (not the original skeptics) have asked to use the Evaluation Spectrums sheet because they felt the no-grade concept was a good one. Perhaps you will, too.

Colorado State University
Ft. Collins, Colorado

EVALUATION SPECTRUMS

Content

Central idea clearly defined with insight and originality	Central idea defined with above average clarity and care	Central idea adequately defined but cliched, trivial, or too general	Central idea loosely defined or unclear or multiple
Thesis stated carefully and unambiguously	Thesis stated clearly	Thesis often ambiguous or too inclusive	Thesis carelessly thought out or missing
Paper shows evidence of a discerning mind selecting substantial, concrete, and relevant support for ideas	Idea developed fully with attention to proportion and emphasis Support is consistently relevant and sufficient	Support adequate but often disproportionate, sketchy, or repetitious	Support often irrelevant, inconsistent, or otherwise distracting
No intellectual cliches		Little originality of idea	Parrots cliches unashamedly
Paper goes beyond skimming surface of a broad subject	Paper handles a substantial topic		Shows thought has ventured no further than the shore, let alone the surface
No false starts			False starts
No contradictions			Contradictions abound
Logic very difficult to challenge	Logic satisfactory	Obvious logical weaknesses	Logic? What's that?

Form

Planning obvious via clear, orderly, sequential progress of idea	Planning shows consistent fulfillment of purpose and method	Purpose and method clear but unimaginatively fulfilled	Plan, purpose, or method not clearly apparent—random sample of mindless generalities

Unity and interrelation of paragraphs and thesis unusually effective	Paragraphs well-developed and unified	Paragraphs unified but not always effectively developed	Paragraphs there, but occasionally disunified and frequently underdeveloped
Transitions precise and effective	Transitions clear and effective	Transitions clear, but mechanical	Transitions inadequate or missing
Coherence and emphasis of paragraphs and sentences impeccable	Coherence and emphasis of paragraphs and sentences clear and effective	Coherence exists, but so does monotony on occasion	Paragraphs and sentences often incoherent
Expression			
Words chosen are fresh, vivid, accurate, precise, concise, idiomatic	Words chosen are appropriate, clear, chosen carefully, and idiomatic	Words chosen are occasionally inappropriate, often vague, trite or unidiomatic—generally too many of them	Words chosen are generally so inappropriate as to interfere with meaning (that's all they are—words)
Figures of speech masterfully used and not obviously contrived	Figures of speech used to good advantage	Figures of speech used are cliches and used because they are flowery	Figures of speech are deadening in their dullness
Rhetorical devices deftly handled	Rhetorical devices clearly under control	Rhetorical devices awkwardly or carelessly contrived	Rhetoric? Can't even spell it!
Mechanics			
Mechanically perfect	Infrequent minor errors in mechanics	Isolated serious error *or* Frequent minor errors in mechanics or spelling	Frequent or consistent serious errors *or* Preponderance of minor or careless errors in mechanics or spelling
Free of irregularities that would loom as barriers to communication	Accepted conventions of punctuation help to clarify meaning		
Rare spelling errors	Infrequent misspellings		

Arthur Atkinson

Inside the Classroom without Walls

My wife and I and baby went East on a summer visit to her family in upstate New York. Sitting on the front porch of her childhood home in the Finger Lakes region, we were in contact with the whole of Earth through electronic media, relaxing in old wooden rockers and sipping iced tea at eveningtime in the midst of the world drama. For not only local news came to that porch, but also news of the state, nation and world. It took no longer to hear of Sharon Tate's murder several states distant or learn of the latest reports released from the Paris peace talks or Chinese-Russian border disputes oceans and continents away than to receive gossip about the town's latest suicide attempt, robbed house or technicolor description of who's sleeping with whom. We sat there plugged into an entire planet through radios, newspapers and local grape vine, reclining on that porch inside McLuhan's global village, a village which is now man's classroom and which has no walls.

Then, by walking half a dozen steps inside to the parlor, we went to the moon. Perched expectantly for hours watching the lunar landing, our senses and emotions were extended electronically via TV across space, so that each of us could experience with Aldrin and Armstrong the sensations of being in an alien land.

Contrast the above learning situation with the one provided by public schools where classrooms have walls, walls which eliminate involvement, thus impeding learning. I'm not speaking of physical walls particularly, but of boundaries created between people and what interests them. You know what I mean; teachers create them day after day: TAKE YOUR SEATS AND BE QUIET!

But when students do they're tucked neatly away in rows, silenced until allowed to talk in an unnatural, one-at-a-time manner, uninvolved and isolated. I don't think such students learn well. I do think it's part of our job to let them learn. To do this we ought to change. Change our ways of running classes to more closely parallel the way students now learn.

Why not let students talk all at once when it aids their learning? They thrive on noise and can easily sort out what they want and need to hear. When they're excited they can't remember to raise hands and wait their turn. They want to shout, argue or beat their desks to punctuate a point, or run across the room to talk more closely with someone who agrees or disagrees with them. Why not let them? Kids get excited; okay, let them go. It may look and sound like chaos, but it's not—it's learning.

We could give students more mobility. They don't have to sit in the same seat every day or stay in their desk all period. If they're writing a composition and don't know how to punctuate a particular sentence, why shouldn't a kid go sit with a friend who does know how? The friend then becomes a teacher to his poorly punctuating classmate. Plus, why do students have to sit in desks always? They sit on the floor at home to watch TV; why shouldn't they do the same in class when reading, discussing, watching a film or listening to a tape? If the floor's dusty they'll gladly bring in old rugs. Just ask.

Silence and rigidity are deadly to teenagers. Both make them tense, which is the way many students feel through much of the school day. We run schools in a linear way: everything in order, in rows, quiet, things done one at a time, with learning occurring through reading (one word, one idea at a time, across the page in rows of letters, read by students sitting in print-demanded isolation in neat rows of desks).

Today's students aren't linear, they're acoustical. They're used to many things happening at once, loudly, with excitement and movement. They don't fit into rows easily like we do. They like swirls and waves. They're comfortable and alert in what appears to us to be mayhem but which for them has an interior order. It's the order of brunch and lunch in the school quad, for example, where everyone's going every which way but all get where they want to be; where conversations dart in and through one another, with radios and cassette recorders turned on, kids fingering and trading guitars, others describing movies or races or parties or fights with intricate gestures and inflections, using an intensity of expression which we teachers would quite likely squelch in the classroom, fearing such excitement might create a disruption of discipline.

Why not bring music into our rooms? Students live within it and for them it's like being in a hostile land when they're without it. A radio or phonograph or both do wonders for a class. My students enter a room alive with music—*their* music. They read to it, discuss in groups with it on, write compositions, take tests—there's music going all the time when it aids the class activity. True, the volume's seldom loud enough to please them for I retain the right to control the knob. Yes, it does cause some

problems. If Janis Joplin's in the middle of a seven-minute song when I finish roll and want to begin class, I've got to hold off until she finishes. "It's a sin to stop a song," students say, and I agree. (Would you have let anyone lift the needle on Judy Garland's "Over the Rainbow" back in 1942 when you were a kid?) After all, I'm an English teacher and what's being said today in rock lyrics through rock arranging is very definitely poetry.

Music and mobility and excited, even boisterous talk let students be more comfortable. I think comfortable persons learn better. Two years ago at the high school where I work we tried having a member from each department demonstrate in a faculty meeting what was taught in his particular discipline. And it was dreary! A tired and nervous teacher would get up to very formally recite information about curriculum, methods and departmental philosophy to the rest of us as we feigned interest while fighting to stay awake. That's what school is like for many students.

Contrast that with the faculty lounge or lunchroom during brunch or lunch when teachers are excitedly talking of classes, of what works and what flopped, of new equipment, films, or of developing additional courses. That's what the classroom without walls is like. Noisy, many people talking simultaneously, freedom of movement, food around, a comfortable feeling among persons intently involved in exploring what they care about.

If we could get this sense of comfort into our classrooms I think students would learn more there. The changes suggested above would help. They'd make class more like the shopping center parking lot next door to my own school, where each year more of our students choose to congregate. It's their lounge where they can smoke, drink coffee and socialize freely, as we do in ours. This year some bright students are joining the "hards" in that lot. And more than a few, bright and hard together, are cutting classes, the boring classes, to spend more time over there. It's the classroom without walls, which each month draws additional students out of the rigidity of formal classrooms.

Clayton Valley High School
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David P. Demarest, Jr.

"I Obey the Rules and Remain a Fool"*

In 1968-69 Carnegie-Mellon University ran a half-day college preparatory program for a group of about thirty high school seniors. The students came from schools all over Pittsburgh, spending their mornings in the home high school and every afternoon on the campus taking an English course and a math course. They were all supposedly "underachievers"—a term they detested—bright kids with mediocre records; they all fit the label "inner-city"; two-thirds of them were black. The program was intended to motivate them toward college, and while it is a simplistic measure of real success, about three-fourths of them in fact went to college, most with good scholarships.

My title comes from a poem written last year by a black twelfth-grader who is now at Bryn Mawr.

America, Land of Misery

America, I love but hate thee too,
I am cold, hungry and without shoes.
Why are you doing this to me,
America, land of misery?

America, I love but hate thy laws,
They are not in favor of my cause.
Why are you doing this to me,
America, land of misery?

America, I love but hate thy schools,
I obey the rules and remain a fool.
Why are you doing this to me,
America, land of misery?

*This article is a shortened version of a paper given at the 1969 NCTE Annual Convention in Washington, D.C. In the original presentation, poems were shown on an overhead screen with the taped voice of each student author reading his own work.

America, I love but hate thy freedoms,
Why don't you take them back and keep them?
Why are you doing this to me,
America, land of misery?

America, I love but hate thy system,
It is not for me but for other men.
Why are you doing this to me,
America, land of misery?

My assumptions about so-called underachievers have a lot in common with those of Jonathan Kozol or Herbert Kohl. And I guess the line "I obey the rules and remain a fool" is another way of putting the title of James Hearndon's book *The Way It Spozed to Be*. I assume that many underachievers are bright kids who have never been able to find anything good to do in a classroom, who have been turned off by alien rules instead of encouraged to express themselves. Such generalizations probably apply particularly to blacks. Every black kid can tell you his own horror stories about the times teachers warned him that it is not nice to act too black in class. And it is a standard part of a black's growing up in America to arrive at that moment of career-choice in high school and be advised not to go into law but into carpentry or social work; you can read about that in Malcolm X or Richard Wright, but it often seems that there are as many examples of the story as there are black kids in a class. In English, teachers face a special and very difficult aspect of this general problem: how do you correct grammar according to the rules without giving a kid the feeling that his own dialect is wrong and that he is therefore somehow inferior? It's tricky, even with all sorts of good intentions.

I thus arrive at a working hypothesis: the rules must be eased up. Students must come to see that they already actually can do work that is good and important (and teachers can't fake this: teachers must genuinely be able to enjoy work that follows no tidy, conventional rule). Confidence and motivation are at stake, and underachievers—especially blacks—are not going to make it in a tough college without confidence and motivation. Middleclass whites have it different: the conveyor belt can carry them through; they don't have to exert much will-power if they don't want to.

It is therefore not adequate to think of bringing black underachievers up to the level of white middleclass students. They must bring themselves to something beyond that: they must consciously decide that they want college, and they must develop the motivation to prevail over what they find there. This is a big order, but I hypothesize that relaxing the rules

may give the classroom a kinder face than it's had before, that students may be encouraged to risk the perils of college if they come to feel that the classroom may, potentially, allow them to work out for themselves the question of who they are instead of telling them to obey the rules and remain a fool. Self-discovery, self-assertion must be the goals.

In addition to the usual theme assignments, I therefore instituted as one major teaching (or learning) device something I'm sure many of you have tried—the weekly journal. The basic guidelines are simple: each week the student hands in several pieces of work; the important point is that the work is absolutely anything the student wants it to be—cribbed poetry, doodles, math assignments, cartoons, strings of cuss words, poems, shopping lists, essays, etc. This work is never graded or corrected, but simply recorded as handed in. Sometimes I made comments, but the prime source of comment is the class itself, because early in the semester I began to put on the overhead projector each week some things that are especially good out of the journals, asking the author to read aloud his own work and to answer questions from the class. The urge to write the journals should thus come from the class, and the journals will be good or bad in a given week in proportion to what kind of an urge the class has developed.

I now want to show you some things I've received in journals and to make several additional specific points with them. The first point is this: slang and profanity can be beautiful; the second: black kids like to think black thoughts, so why not let them? the third is this: a teacher gets some plain good work from journals. Obviously, these categories are not mutually exclusive.

Slang and profanity are beautiful. Black dialect is a rich and vivid language, so why shouldn't black students use it in an English class where the teacher is probably proclaiming the importance of richness and vividness? Besides, blacks have the special advantage of knowing two dialects, because they also know the language of the white mainstream. Their divided environment has made them lifelong linguists who can shift back and forth between two linguistic worlds with effects that are often biting and witty. Further, their background has made many black students think seriously about language; they have a particular cultural readiness to respond to certain features of a study of language.

Here is a journal entry on drugs and drinking that is a relevant illustration of linguistic awareness.

> Today more and more young people find themselves getting high. The most common is drinking. Reefer is another way of becoming high that is becoming common. Heroin is finding its place too. Out of

> all these I have experienced two. These are drinking and reefer or bush. I like to get high off of both. The bush high is a smooth mellow high. It takes you through plenty of changes. It makes music sound better to me. It's slower and the instruments are more distinct. When I'm high off of bush I like to listen to jazz. I could dig smoking about four "dynamite j's" and listening to *74 miles away*. It gives you an out of sight "peck jones." That means it makes you hungry. It can make a bowl of beans taste like steak and mashed potatoes. When you've layed off some bad bush you can really do some square business rapping. It gives you the power to blow any broad's mind. "Grogging" is bad too. It's not mellow as "smoke" but it gives you a good partying high. Grog some vodka or gin or rum or "bushead" and you got a nice partying high. Drinking just might have some slight after effects. There are also another pretty nice high. This one is from nul's. All they do is make you nod. There are some other ones that I haven't tried and don't plan to. The "bo" high is a bad thing. I heard it puts you through a lot of weird changes. "Scag" is supposedly the baddest. They say it feels almost as good as sex. Some of the dudes I saw that have a "jones" be in pretty bad shape when they can't "get over." Those are the only ways I'm hep to either from hearsay or actual experience. I know you've been high off some drink before, but I recommend the bush to you.

This entry is, I think, rather typical of the kind of work students do when they work in the classroom with dialect: they are showing it off, enjoying its conspicuous display.

Sophisticated and beautiful use of slang and profanity are supplemented by papers that explicitly theorize about language, as in this poem.

MASKED WORDS

> As I sat and listened
> The words I heard had no meaning.
> They were words with masks to hide their meaning.
> The people who used such words wore masks
> Masks of a pale white color.
> Words of 14 letters instead of 4
> Emphatic, pulchritude, fornication are masked words
> Words of confused illusion.
> Masked people speaking masked words
> Complicated, confused, fat, illusionary words.
> Is to be simple and direct being stupid?
> Or do you mask your stupidity with masked words?

I could illustrate journal entries on Blackness almost endlessly, but I'd like you to look finally at a piece that I think would fare well in the rather unpolitical atmosphere of an upperclass creative writing course in

college. It caught my eye not only because it's strikingly good but because it is very directly about the subject of self-discovery. It argues by implication my whole point in assigning the journal—that classrooms and English teachers, whether in high school or college, must seek a saner balance than they have in the past between self-expression and rules.

To Whom It May Concern

As I peer though this window, I see a reflection.
I am hoping that the window has a curve in it:
If it does not I am a queer figure.
I can see my face but there are two holes for eyes;
The eyes are the window to my soul,
If they are really absent I have a problem.
I had better turn and look at a mirror with a flat face.
Oh, no

To paraphrase: if a kid can't discover his own image in the classroom, he's in trouble. And everything indicates that the new generation of students—black and white—will not accept tamely the role of educated fools. Black students will neither go to college nor perform well there if such has been the burden of their college preparation.

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Stephen Graff

Character Poems and Short Stories

"Poetry? Who cares about *that* stuff?"

Every year the same barrier goes up and the battle lines are drawn in the classroom. Perhaps the easiest way out is to forego the study of poetry entirely, but that would mean unconditional surrender. On the other hand, there doesn't have to be a war.

Since students find some of the characters in short stories rather interesting—even being able to generate some empathy for them, might they not find an interest in characters portrayed in poems? Rather than have a unit on poetry with one tenth-grade class, I decided to intersperse some character poems with the short stories we were reading. Perhaps the students could transfer their short story experience to characters found in poems.

This was the general plan. Before handing out a duplicated sheet with two poems by Edgar Lee Masters, I explained the kinship between a character in a short story and a character in a poem, stressing that a poet describes his character in verse rather than prose. I pointed out that the poet assigns traits to his characters just as the fiction writer does. I also explained, however, that we would at all times concern ourselves primarily with people described in poems, not with plot or climax as in short stories. I emphasized that just as an artist uses paint to create a person, a poet uses words.

After handing out the Masters poems "Walter Simmons" and "Elliott Hawkins," I read one of the poems and asked the same questions about this character as I had about those in short stories: What are the strong points of this person? What are his weak points? What did this person accomplish or hope to accomplish? What are his ideas? What would you do in this situation?

Slowly there were cracks in the anti-poetry barrier. Some of the students began to respond to my questions and to see that poetry can be painless. In short, their interest grew as the transition was made from

short story characters to characters found in poems. For the remainder of the short story unit, I used a few character poems by Masters, Edwin Arlington Robinson, and others, including "Maud Muller," "Lochinvar," "The Ballad of William Sycamore," "The Highwayman," and "Richard Cory."*

A few students volunteered to read some of these poems to the class, and taping the poems for later playback contributed greatly to the interest and attention of the class. Some students drew sketches of the characters for the bulletin board, an activity that resulted in a sense of accomplishment on the part of artistic students who were not also good readers. Two writing assignments were write a comparison of a character from a short story and one from a poem and to write their own character poems.

After I pointed out that Masters' characters lived in the fictitious town of Spoon River and Robinsons' in Tilbury Town, one student suggested that we create our own imaginary place. After considering a few suggestions from the class, we named our town Sunshineville. Their short character poems—some good, some bad—described relatives, friends, merchants, and other fictitious persons in our town. To many students, the writing of only a few lines was an achievement, making lavish praise an essential part of sustaining their interest. But at least the barrier between the students and poetry began to seem less real.

From this experience I was able to arrive at some guidelines regarding students and poetry:

1. Character poems are more suited to students' needs; lyric poetry elicits little response.
2. It is unnecessary to include a poetry unit *per se;* in fact, it is more desirable to eliminate it.
3. Use character poems in conjunction with a short story unit in order to sustain interest.
4. Stress character traits of persons in poems. What is the poet saying about the person? Do not include structure or symbolism. This will permanently alienate many of the students.
5. Have students draw pictures of characters in the poems. This is quite effective with slow learners.
6. Stress the idea that the poet is merely describing his character just as the short story writer does.
7. Students are more amenable to poems whose titles contain names of people, such as "Uncle Ananias," "Mrs. George Reece," and "Willie Metcalf."

*Good character poems can be found in *Yesterday and Today* edited by Louis Untermeyer (Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., nd.); *Stories in Verse* edited by Max T. Holm (Odyssey Press, Inc., nd.); and *Story Poems* edited by Untermeyer (Washington Square Press, Inc., nd.).

8. Writing assignments should be brief. Why do you admire this particular character? Why would you like to meet him? What would you say to him? Why did this person interest you?
9. To stimulate interest, create an imaginary town and have students write character poems of people in it, both real and imaginary.

Students with serious reading problems acquire a sense of accomplishment in satisfactorily analyzing a particular character in a poem, and many identify with some of the characters' traits. Students find in these poems more secure ground because they have at the least been asked to analyze short story characters for most of their school lives and therefore are psychologically more prepared for character poems than for any other type.

I am not suggesting a panacea for promoting engagement with poetry; however, deep inroads can be established in creating rapport and in breaching the barrier we encounter whenever poetry is introduced to students. A sense of frustration and futility may not be completely eliminated, but even if it is reduced somewhat by the warmth of interest and enjoyment that character poems radiate, then the experience is well worthwhile.

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Katharine H. Rich

Creative Evaluations

Two students in the corner tune their guitars. A boy readies the tape recorder, while a girl instructs her volunteer assistant in what she wants with the overhead projector. Several people hang drawings and collages on the blackboard, while others set up an 8 mm projector and screen. Strangers, student and adult, drift in and sit down where there is space in the lively room, waiting, watching the activity. Off to one side sits a woman, plainly part of the environment, yet a nonparticipant. She also smilingly sits and watches. Who would think that a two-hour final exam was about to begin?

The students sit on the floor, lean against the wall, pushing desks aside for unobstructed vision.

"I'm ready first," a girl says as she perches on a three-legged stool and begins to strum her guitar. She explains that a few evenings before she had been watching a bullfight on TV and had become so enthralled with the drama and pageantry that "a poem came" which she then set to music. She played simple chords to accompany her soft soprano and finished to enthusiastic applause.

The audience shifted slightly for the next presentation, a short story read by a boy whose gift was developed description. The group knew in advance it would be absorbing. More clapping as he finished.

The girl with the assistant at the overhead projector moved forward to the old three-legged stool, tape recorder in hand. She asked for lights out, punched the button, and the rhythmic beat of a throbbing heart filled the room as on the screen appeared that moving heart in brilliant red. Punctuated by the sounds and vision of that beating heart, she read a long free-verse on ethical problems of a heart transplant case. It ended with silence and darkness as the case resolved his problem. For a few moments no one moved or spoke, and then the first sigh initiated an enthusiastic response to this dramatic presentation.

As the program continued, the feeling of satisfaction in the room

grew stronger. The students knew they were enjoying their own individuality and that of others; they felt the joy of achievement and self-discipline; they liked the recognition of their own originality. The teacher smiling in the corner was doing nothing but feeling delighted with the way her students had come through again.

What had led up to this happy occasion? Who ever heard of an English class having a final examination this way? What was really happening?

Two weeks earlier the teacher of this creative writing class had asked the group, "What is art?" A few fuzzy attempts at definition came forth, so the group went off to the library for a couple of days to read about art. They were astonished to find material under aesthetics, philosophy, photography, painting, sculpture, writing, literature of many nations. They read, they gathered in clusters to argue with their peers, and finally each came to his own conclusion about what art is. He then wrote a lengthy paragraph of definition.

A week before the scheduled final examination, the teacher discussed it with the class, saying that in her view it was not reasonable to expect a creative, original mind to turn on like a faucet at a given time one morning. Creativity doesn't work that way—it generally needs a period of interior bubbling and simmering before an idea begins to come forth in words. Consequently, she said that the class would have that week to prepare a "masterpiece," a piece of writing which was the best effort of each student and which would fit within his definition of art.

During the final examination period, he would then present his writing to his class, sharing it through whatever medium of the fine arts he felt appropriate to the particular composition. And then he would turn in to the teacher a written copy of his masterpiece to be read and discussed later. The problem of evaluation of the oral presentation was left to the students, who set up criteria very specifically from originality of thought to fluency of language, and who carefully evaluated each other's presentations, turning those papers in to the teacher.

What were the results of this experience? A new recognition of each person's individuality. A new satisfaction that no matter how hard it is to read aloud one's own thoughts to an audience of peers it could be done. A new sense of class sharing. A new motivation to do one's best. A combination of best writing and oral experience, with reading and listening for good measure. And an extra compliment—invitations from adult groups within the community to do programs for them—and a chance for these young individuals to show the thoughtful logic, the human feeling, the sensitivity that is theirs.

What did the teacher do to encourage individuality with its unique expression? The teacher set up the plan two weeks ahead of time, helped students with their writings as they needed help, ordered the equipment students requested from the school audiovisual office, and then sat back in the corner.

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Barbara Kirkpatrick

A Farewell to Arms in 120 Seconds: Charades as an Introduction to Communication

We play charades in my English classes. I have two basic objectives to this though there are many minor objectives. One is strictly academic: we play charades so my students can see how much is said with body language, and the reverse—how hard it is to communicate with just the body, and thus the short-cut speech is. Secondly, and just as important, a game played as this is draws the class closer together, makes students more aware of each other, and makes them more at ease with each other; thus charades approaches them individually within a group context.

Charades in the classroom is played just as it would be played in your living room. The class is divided into two groups. I prepare a list of book, song, movie, play and poem titles from which each group draws. I tried letting each group prepare the titles for the other group but they came up with such titles as *Modern English Rhetoric* which even an expert might find hard to act out. I choose titles the students should be familiar with and ones that are easily acted out, such as *The Painted Bird*, *Catch-22*, and *The Gospel Singer*.

One person draws the title, shows it to the *other* group and attempts to act out the title in front of his own group. There is a two-minute time limit, though rarely does any student take the full time. One student even did "Does Your Chewing Gum Lose Its Flavor on the Bedpost Overnight?" in fifteen seconds flat. I keep the time and one group plays against the other for the total time.

What does it do for the class specifically? Well, it's fun. The students laugh a lot. And they learn from it. They learn not to feel ill at ease in getting up in front of a whole class of students—after all, it's just a game and everyone else is doing it. They are learning how we depend on one another—this is a group game. If one's group does not respond with ideas about what an individual is acting out, then he could stand up there for-

ever. They learn book titles incidentally and comments such as "I've never *heard* of that. What's it about?" come up frequently. And subtly but very swiftly an atmosphere is being created in the classroom—that learning is fun, meaningful, and not so bad after all.

But the students are also getting an introduction to just how much we do talk with our bodies, that a shrug or grimace does have meaning—that there is, indeed, body English as well as spoken or written English. They learn that we also listen with our eyes. Charades also provide the students with the opportunity to see how easy it is to talk and how fast talking is. Two minutes, or 120 seconds, to "say" with the body *A Farewell to Arms* instead of the two seconds or less it takes with the mouth and tongue. And I'm learning about my students from watching them. I see the quiet, shy student who has never said much in class use his imagination, and I see the talker not use his. I see creativity. I see enthusiasm take the place of creativity. I see who has the background of reading—the good guessers. And I have seen over and over again how easily we all get to looking at something one way so that the other possibilities or other ways to look at something are not open to us.

A graphic example of this is when a burly male student draws *Moby Dick*. I watch his mind work. "Aha," he says to himself, "I know how to do it." And you can bet the first thing that has occurred to him is obscene. But then he realizes he *can't* do it that way. Sometimes he even looks over at me and I shake my head no. But then he's stuck. He tries to think of other ways but his mind keeps going back to the "dirty" way (and face it, if there's an obscene way to act out a title, the students will think of it) and he can't think of anything else. He knows Moby Dick is a whale but he won't think of it. He knows he can do a sounds-like with "lick" but he won't think of it and so he stands until his two minutes are up. And afterwards, the class jumps on him, why didn't you do this, or this? But this makes another point too. It's harder to think when you have pressure on you.

Charades helps me to humanize my classroom. It is a first step in a long process of breaking down the barriers between the teacher and the student, the student and other students, and the student and the communication process. Students always want to play it again. They think it is fun. But I think they've also learned something from it. I don't know if it would work for someone else. It works for me. And I think my students are the better for it.

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Sister Mary Kathryn Grant

Classroom Community: Prerequisite to Individualized Instruction

At first glance, the concepts of community and individuality may seem contradictory. However, they are much more complementary than contradictory. In fact, it is almost impossible to genuinely have one without the other. As a person I can only feel free to be myself when I am an accepted and accepting member of the group. Authentic individuality --that being-all-together quality--can only come when I feel that I belong in a group. Time and again experience in the classroom will bear this out: it is impossible to develop individualized educational processes unless the community of the classroom is first attained.

There are many ways to create a sense of community in the classroom, and perhaps a good place to start is to enable the students to know each other--by name. I never cease to be amazed when I visit a classroom and realize that the students do not know each other by name. Often the physical arrangements militate against knowing one's classmates. If all I ever see is the back of someone's head, what experience of community is possible? Half-circles, horse shoes, diagonal rows, almost any seating arrangement is preferable to straight rows. Concern for the growth of each student is not only the concern of the teacher; it should also be important to every other student. How, if I rarely see Bob's face or never speak to him by name, can I manifest my concern for him--as an individual, as a person? As teacher I should know my students, and not only by name.

When a class works together to plan and carry out an activity, things happen which might never have occurred if I had legislated "what we will do tomorrow . . ." Student involvement in planning courses and activities is one very effective way to insure individualized approaches and group participation. When a student takes active part in the actual planning, his involvement increases enormously; he has a vested interest.

Evaluation must follow such an experience to be fully effective. Students should discuss what they have helped to plan and execute including how and why it has succeeded or failed; they often learn much about themselves and about the group by doing so. Process charts which record the flow of a discussion are often quite revealing. These may be prepared with a simple score keeping device:

Group II	Mary	𝍸 I	Tom	II
	Bob		Joan	IIII
	Sue	III	Bill	I

Or by means of an actual process chart, indicating who spoke to whom,

Taping a session and playing it back later with a followup analysis of the group dynamics is also quite successful. Such devices stimulate greater awareness of others and the group begins to learn something about inclusion.

An often neglected but vital dimension of group dynamics within the classroom is nonverbal communication. This Emersonian adage is all too often unexamined: "What you are doing is speaking so loudly, I cannot hear what you are saying." I can insist that I want a student-centered, individualized approach with my voice but my nonverbal communication may flatly contradict this. Things such as the use of time and the use of space say a great deal.

The amount of time spent on an activity and the location of that time are significant aspects of nonverbal communication. Is the amount of time spent on this matter proportionate to the importance of the issue? Quite often there is an inverse proportion. Recently I visited a classroom and observed a teacher spend a full fifteen minutes stapling students' exercise sheets together. Somehow, I sense that the teacher communicated to those students the importance of stapling—and unfortunately not the importance of the work. Frequently the time spent on the details of classroom management infinitely outweighs the importance of the details themselves. Not only do I communicate the significance of trivia by such use of time but I also subtract from the actual learning time of the class period.

The use of space embraces many aspects of the academic environment, from the seating arrangement to the location of objects. For example, where is the teacher's desk? Where do I post student work; where do I post announcements, directions, and assorted non-essentials? I may say I have a student-centered environment, but when I locate my desk in the center of the room and post student work in the back, I communicate something quite contrary to my intentions.

How I sit, stand, gesture, and smile are other very real communications. No matter what I teach, I always teach me; it's an occupational hazard. Often my nonverbal communication is more supportive, encouraging, responsive, and personal than any structure I may create.

I can also learn a great deal about my students through their nonverbal communication. Where they sit, how they look, how they write or speak (or don't speak) are all important aspects of what they can say to me and to each other. If I am sensitive to these nonverbal signals, I can create an environment which stimulates and provides for their growth as individuals and as a community. The refrain from *King and I* is only too true: ". . . when I become a teacher, by my pupils I'll be taught. . . ." I will be taught not only something about the subject matter, but something about them, about myself, and something about the group that we make up.

The persons in a particular class make up a *we*. It is only when that *we* has formed, has become supportive and creative, that my class has become a community; only then can individualized approaches be successful. Unless a sense of community can be created in the classroom, I will have just another group of students doing their own thing, without any awareness of or responsibility for each other. If I want more than that, if I want to create an environment in which each student can grow and fulfill himself as he helps others to grow and fulfill themselves, then I must —or rather we must—create a community, because classroom community is a prerequisite to individualized instruction.

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Phyllis Randell Shutt

Teacher-Student Dialogue

Ego against ego, fear against fear, establishment against the individual, teacher against student—such a classroom situation should never have come to pass. Unfortunately it has. And now teachers are frantically seeking a remedy for student alienation, for unrest, for anonymity, which some so blithely blame on burgeoning numbers.

What is the goal of every teacher? Ideally, it is an integration between teacher as a vital force and student as an allowable variable of human behavior.

In one small freshman composition group in one small university this goal is being attempted. The students and the teacher started by calling their struggle toward individuality The Daily Commentary. They may very well end by calling it the miracle of dialogue.

This technique was introduced the first day of class in the following way:

> Each day we will stop class five minutes before the hour is over. Each student will write a one- or two-sentence commentary on any subject he chooses. The commentary may be an observation of teacher or classmate, a remembrance, a disagreement, a new idea, an unrelated thought, a bit of humor, an attitude, a criticism. The primary stipulation is that the daily commentary be an honest statement. Otherwise there are no specific guidelines. Each time you write a commentary, the teacher will write one back to you. Student and teacher will thus set up an exchange of ideas from day to day.

The first few days the daily commentaries from the students went something like this:

> I feel this class may prove quite interesting.
>
> My daily observation of today's class is that I'm very confused and feel that this class is going to be very hard.

> You want us to be honest, so I'll try to be. Right now I'm not overly excited about this course.
>
> You present an appealing picture of the course. Now, I suppose, the painting lies in the students' hands.
>
> This course is going to be very strange. It's the first one I haven't been able to form an opinion about.
>
> The first day of class makes me very nervous. The course sounds like an interesting challenge.
>
> This class is going to be fun! Should I be afraid of saying something to make you angry?
>
> I'm one of those people to whom grades are very important.
>
> Hey, did you know there is going to be a total eclipse of the sun next month?

Lack of space precludes recording my responses to these commentaries. Suffice to say that I focused heavily on honesty, on revealing myself to the students. However, I didn't explicitly state, "Don't write what you think the teacher wants to hear." Two or three weeks went by, and the daily commentaries began to change. The following is a sampling:

> I'm sorry to say that you might be wrong about porpoises not being able to reason.
>
> I'm bored!
> Oh Lord,
> How sad.
> Too bad . . .
> Try the ad column!
>
> Punctuation absolutely bores the hell out of me.
>
> I almost cried in class today . . . I am disappointed with myself and the way I am living my life at this time . . . and your discussion of the practical and relevant made my trials just that much more real. I think learning is a difficult process if a person is trying to be selective . . . I have always tried to be selective . . . not necessarily choosy, but just aware of the things that are right for me and my life.
>
> When you write back to me, don't keep asking me what my opinion is! I'm not interested in your opinion!
>
> I notice that when you write on the board you tend to write sideways. This bothers me.
>
> I find going to the library a much dreaded experience. I know of nothing that bothers me more. I came from a small school with only two shelves of books and this place is simply a jungle to me.

> Communication is based on selfishness; everybody wants something from me. Please excuse the pencil: my pen died.
>
> How come I didn't feel stupid when I admitted that I didn't know what an infinitive was?
>
> I finally shaved my moustache off after debating about it for three days. Did you notice?

The semester slipped into spring. Perhaps the daily commentaries began to reflect this vital time of the year. Or perhaps the miracle of dialogue was at work.

> Hurray for teachers who write the words where the kids want them and not where she does. Hurray for class discussions. Color me happy!
>
> How can you say something new about being alone? I like to be alone, but other people always feel I'm lonely if I let them know this. I'm not really, and so a great essay would be to explain my feeling. Wow! I've got myself excited now.
>
> Good day . . . Sunshine! God is smiling on us today. I can feel it! Have a peaceful weekend. My parents are coming to see me, and I'm happy. I'm wearing sneakers today; boy are they comfortable. No wonder my grandmother wears them.
>
> We should be animals.
> They don't lie awake in
> the dark and
> weep for their sins.
> They're complacent and
> not unhappy over
> the whole earth.
>
> Well, you're not going to believe this, but I found myself a new love.

For readers who prefer explicit statement rather than implication, the following commentaries summarize what the students think of the daily commentary technique.

> Maybe I've been too personal. I have written down on the daily commentary certain feelings I have shared with few beings, if any. You lucky person you!
>
> We can both say what we think and neither of us gets mad, I hope!
>
> I don't like to write commentaries because they make me think about what happened in class—which really makes them good, but it takes more concentration than most classes.

> I can say what I think without fear of being thought stupid or ignorant.
>
> It very effectively achieves the purpose of personalizing a very impersonal course. It is an informal, honest way to open lines of communication and develop a sort of friendship and affinity with the instructor. It is also a release of otherwise inhibited thoughts—most educational atmospheres don't give a damn about my daily thoughts and opinions, and this is the best classroom procedure I've yet to see.
>
> I have been subjected to classes, labs, and numerous other college activities in which I knew the teacher's name and nothing more in a year's time. The closest contact I had with these professors was handing in a test. In this daily commentary situation, I feel that the teacher has projected herself, a person, someone who is human like me, and not just another "walking lecturer."

It is only fair to warn the reader that a teacher-student dialogue, in which both participants attempt an honest communication, is potentially risky. All human beings fight to protect their self image from possible destruction. Both teacher and student are often afraid to trust too much of themselves to each other. But if teacher-student dialogue can help to humanize the classroom, then the rewards are worth the risks.

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How Much Editing in the Primary Grades?

Should teachers correct the mechanical errors of primary grade children? In a longitudinal study an attempt was made to teach mechanics of language to primary children, through a functional approach, and to develop student individuality through pupil-teacher conferences.[1] The whole emphasis on having children write out of their own experience provided the context for developing individuality.

No language textbooks were used and no period in the daily schedule was set apart for language instruction. For the most part, writing was based on experiences and the need to communicate. Instruction in the mechanics of writing was a part of the on-going activities. Writing was accepted as a tool of communication throughout the day, growing out of the needs of the class or individual students to communicate, and opportunities were provided for children to learn to write through actual situations that required writing. Children were not taught rules about punctuation and capitalization; they learned to punctuate and capitalize by observing the teacher's example as she recorded their sentences. As soon as they were able to write independently, they were instructed to read orally their own writings in order to ascertain pauses, complete stops, questions and exclamations in speech.

In the beginning, children dictated their compositions to the teacher who recorded their ideas as they came forth. Recordings were sometimes made on a child's tablet, on the chalkboard, or on a large primary chart tablet, depending on the circumstances.

The purpose for writing the children's thoughts as they dictated was to acquaint the child with the use of punctuation marks that were reflected in their spoken language: to help children see the relation between written speech symbols and oral speech.

[1]Dorothy J. Burrus, "A Three-Year Comparative Study of the Functional Approach to Teaching the Mechanics of Language," Dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 1970.

Initial dictation experiences followed art lessons, at which time a child dictated a sentence about his picture and the teacher wrote his exact words on a piece of paper, attaching it to his drawing.

Following a group or class activity, such as a science experiment, children dictated a cooperative report as the teacher recorded their findings and personal reactions to what they had discovered. Individual children volunteered information as it was needed to complete the report. As the teacher took dictation in the beginning weeks, she pointed out the need for capital letters and different kinds of punctuation to clarify meaning. For example: "Is this beginning a new idea? Then we need a capital letter." "You used such strong feeling in your voice, we will need to use an exclamation mark to show how the explosion sounded." In time, the children made suggestions to the teacher about punctuation, or she elicited their cooperation as they continued to record information and feelings about class events, experiments, excursions, and other activities. Not all activities were recorded. When enthusiasm for writing about "what we did and saw" waned, the children were given a recess from recording, and creative writing was encouraged.

In addition to group reports and stories involving all the children, provision was made for individual children to dictate stories or narrate episodes significant to them: pets, birthdays, trips, visits to relatives, shopping with mom, dad's new job, a new baby in the home and other events in the lives of the children were incentives for dictated stories.

To foster imaginative writing, children were exposed to many folk tales, fairy tales, fables, animal stories and poetry through oral reading by the teacher. The use of pictures to develop sentence sense, vivid imagery, and sequential story development was also employed. For example, from the picture the child created a story in his own words based on his own feelings and inclinations.

Gradually some children began to express a desire to write their own stories and were allowed to do so. Other children continued to depend on the teacher for most of their longer stories even in third grade. During the second half of the first year a primary typewriter was used by the teacher to record stories as the children dictated. When the teacher stopped typing, the child supplied the punctuation he thought was necessary to the meaning. Each child was given the opportunity for one typed story per week for the remainder of the first grade. However, the majority of children in second and third grades preferred to write their own stories.

No emphasis was placed on correct spelling of words; however, as children demonstrated an interest in the correct form, they were encouraged to keep a self-made dictionary, one updated with new words at each

writing and maintained throughout the remainder of the experiment. When a child asked for the spelling of a word, the teacher wrote it on a piece of paper. Later the child recorded it in his own dictionary for future use. Additional sources for words included commercial picture dictionaries and lists in readers. At times the child supplied the beginning sound of a word, either leaving a blank space until the teacher was available to help with the spelling or using his own sense of sound to form his word.

When a story or report was completed, the child shared it with the class, with a group, with a friend, and/or filed it in an individual folder for his weekly conference with the teacher. At this conference the teacher helped the child use his voice inflection in punctuating his composition. Modification of sentence structure was suggested only when meaning was questionable. During second and third grades, misspelled words were corrected by the child during the conference and later recorded in his personal dictionary. However, no more than five words were changed in any one writing. This decision was based on the idea that too many corrections represent failure to the learner and he becomes discouraged.[2] A file of these compositions was accumulated for the three-year period and served as a guide to the teacher in extending individual growth in expression of ideas and vocabulary development; they were also indications of individual interest. The folders were available to children at all times and were often used in the conferences to reinforce skills already taught and to introduce new skills. A weekly log was also kept by the teacher to guide her in preparation of a varied program of language activities.

Children looked forward to the conferences, sharing only the stories and letters they selected. It also provided a time for the teacher to take care of individual differences. Some children were more ready than others for help with more mature skills. For instance, some were ready to learn about generalizations for forming plurals in words ending in *y*. A boy whose physical immaturity would not allow prolonged handwriting might be helped in a different manner. The teacher would supply the writing as he dictated his story and suggested the proper mechanics. Aside from the favorable effects on writing, children gained added reading experiences through reading their own stories. Children learned to recognize the words they dictated from their own speaking vocabularies. In order to teach the mechanics of language in a functional approach, it seemed important to maintain a permissive climate where all writing was accepted and where ideas rather than rules were paramount. In a climate characterized by

[2]Mauree Applegate, *Easy in English* (Evanston, Illinois: Row, Peterson, 1960), pp. 279, 393; Ruth G. Strickland, "Evaluating Children's Compositions," *Elementary English*, 37 (May 1960) 325.

teacher-pupil planning, children had the opportunity to develop self-direction and independence.

During the three-year study many parents communicated their enthusiasm for the program because their children were writing spontaneously and were excited about it. This consequence alone seems to support a program that emphasizes the functional approach to the teaching of the mechanics of language and fosters the individuality of the child as he communicates his ideas and feelings.

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Hawaii's Peer Tutoring Experiences

The practice of peer tutoring is a fundamental component of the Language Skills Program of the Hawaii English Project, a five-year developmental project funded partially under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and a joint activity of the Hawaii State Department of Education and the University of Hawaii. The project is designed as a K-12 curriculum in English consisting of Language Skills, Literature, and Language Systems programs. The Language Skills Program is intended to enable children to reach a sixth-grade level of independent performance in reading, writing, and listening/speaking skills. Approximately 2,500 kindergarten, first-, and second-grade children participated in the Language Skills Program in pilot or field schools on each of the islands in Hawaii last year and this number is due to increase this year to 12,000 children who will represent every elementary school in the State.

Underlying the Language Skills Program is the principle that a curriculum must be tailored to adapt to the variety of ways in which children differ: in level and rate of educational achievement, in the degree of interest in a subject, in style of learning, and in the need for indications of success and to participate in decisions affecting their own learning. The curriculum planners in the program have developed a hierarchy of objectives in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A variety of materials utilizing multiple modes of presentation serve as available tools from which both teachers and learners can tailor a program that meets the unique needs of each learner as he increases in his control of the oral and graphic symbols of the English language.

An educationally responsive learning environment has been developed in an attempt to create a total learning system, including the physical classroom arrangement, instructional materials and hardware, the teacher, and other learners. The learner is prized as a decision maker in a learning environment that simultaneously permits and requires him to take an

active role in selecting learning activities, communicating to others what he has learned, and recording and evaluating his own progress.

During the language arts period, learners at various stations around the classroom work on materials individually or with others in groups of two, three, or four while the teacher moves from one activity to another observing, facilitating and directing learning, monitoring progress, and instructing where necessary.

Implementation of Peer Tutoring

Peer tutoring has been designed as an essential aspect of the program and is promoted in several ways. First, the combination of two or three grade levels—such as kindergarten, first, and second graders within the same classroom—maintains a wider spread of performance levels and increases the pool of available tutors. Second, a curriculum encompassing a variety of language arts areas—reading, handwriting, typing, and listening/speaking—increases the probability that any child advancing slowly in one or more areas will nevertheless have at least one area in which he can tutor others. A third factor facilitating peer teaching is the nature of instructional materials specifically designed for collaborative work by two or more children.

The Hawaii peer-tutoring model differs essentially from other tutorial models in three aspects. First, tutors are really peers. Unlike other models which have fifth- and sixth-grade children serving as tutors to kindergarten and first-grade children, this program allows the learner to select other children who might be slightly older or younger within his own class to serve as tutors. A sociogram interview of fifty children revealed that a majority preferred to select tutors whom they considered friends. Secondly, the tutoring experience is an integral part of the class day and is intended as an instructional mode for all types of children. There is no remedial concept of "special tutoring" before class, after class, or during the students' own free time. A third and perhaps most essential difference is a unique attempt to develop the potential advantages, both cognitive and affective, that can be gained by the tutor without deemphasizing the gains to the learner. Thus the tutorial model differs significantly from the "monitorial system" developed in England in the late eighteenth century (Wright, 1960) in that the Hawaii program is not an economical substitute for a shortage of teachers.

Tutor Training

Tutor training begins early in the school year and extends through two brief stages prior to the formal tutoring arrangement. In the first

stage the teacher creates a favorable atmosphere for peer tutoring by arranging situations in which children are paired off to "help one another," usually in classroom routines not related to the instructional materials, such as helping another learner find crayons, pencils, and other materials; helping another learner put these items away; or helping another learner who is having difficulty operating a piece of equipment.

In the second stage, peer tutoring is presented as a normal expected behavior, as part of the regular routine, and not as a favor for the teacher. The teacher establishes the concept that a child who has learned something is expected to help someone else learn it. She begins by casually mentioning to a learner who is nearing the end of a unit, "You're almost finished: soon you'll be able to tutor."

The third stage begins when the learner actually has completed a unit and the training becomes specific and individual. It is specific because procedures for instructional materials vary depending upon the task to be performed. It cannot be assumed that because a learner has completed a set of instructional materials he can automatically tutor another child. Thus new tutors are trained in the tutoring procedures for the unit they have completed and are observed closely by the teacher during their first few attempts at tutoring. One method of training tutors that has often proven successful occurs when the teacher role-plays the actions of a learner while individual children take turns playing the role of tutor. Other training techniques include verbal explanations of tutor procedures and the use of trained tutors as peer models.

Future Directions

These experiences have demonstrated the effectiveness of using very young children as tutors and indicate the gains possible for the child who tutors. We have also learned, however, that some children are currently not motivated to tutor others and are not effective in their attempts. Greater attention needs to be given to selecting tutors and learners who will profit from peer-tutoring experiences and to training tutors to demonstrate behaviors which seem productive.

From a research point of view it will become important to determine what subject characteristics and what behaviors are required of a tutor, what matches are optimal between tutor and learner, and what cognitive and affective products are gained from tutoring another child.

Although the tutorial activities in the Hawaii English Project have been largely structured activities involving factual knowledge, experimentation is underway to broaden the role and responsibilities of the tutor in the intermediate elementary grades. A hierarchy of tutorial tasks is be-

ing considered that greatly challenges the imagination and interpersonal skills required of the tutor. Clearly we are only in our infancy in understanding the opportunities for an exciting and humanizing environment that can be created through the use of peer tutoring. Details and preliminary findings concerning peer-tutoring experiences can be found in the references below.

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Julie Ann Carlson

Creative Writing: A Master Key to Individualization

In *Rewarding Creative Behavior,* E. Paul Torrance stresses that the usual pupil produces and respects what is rewarded by the teacher.[1] When the child is praised for his unusual ideas, creative fluency and imaginative products, he is a part of a class whose members respect and react appreciatively to each other's creative endeavors, as well as valuing their own.

Perhaps the key factor in developing a program in creative writing is the mental climate of the classroom. Creative writing is essentially personal in nature, and you are asking the child to reveal, recorded on paper, his innermost thoughts and feelings. Probably from the first day of contact with you, each pupil will decide whether you are essentially a warm, sensitive, appreciative person, for the pupil must attach these adjectives to you in order to feel free to share his perceptions and dreams with you. Creative writing is encouraged in a classroom situation in which you yourself are not afraid to share your unusual ideas and unique turns of phrase. And every serious piece of student writing must receive tactful, understanding comment by you. Remarks similar to: This was such an effective word you used, could you think of another word (or phrase) which would describe it exactly? Your reader might not understand what you mean here. Your reader might find these words too strong.

Encourage, rather than discourage, more thought and effort.

Understanding is one necessary personal trait in any teacher. When you stimulate creative expression, you do not do it selectively. There are going to be those writings which reveal home difficulties, personal problems and undesirable traits. Since you stimulate the child to write his inner thoughts and emotions, you bring some of his personal concerns to the surface and these can be dealt with individually and privately, for creative

[1] (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1965).

writing fosters a personal relationship between student-writer and teacher-editor.

I have found sense imagery, figures of speech and elements of a short story conducive to creative fluency. A specific writing device is presented, analyzed and practiced orally and in writing by pupils in the creative writing period at the beginning of the week.[2] Pupils share and enjoy each other's writings in the creative writing followup period at the end of the week.

Pupils learn that their best source of creative expression is from keen observation, personal experience and a rich vocabulary. The body of any teaching lesson lists questions and activities to realize the objectives. Since authorities stress the importance of helping children to observe and interpret firsthand experience, I usually initiate ideas leading to much pupil verbalization and doing. Burrows claims that in order to gain written fluency, experience in oral expression is more important than actual writing.[3] As specific examples: When sound is discussed, I use many sound-producing objects and ask pupils to describe what they hear. When simile is studied, I point out objects within immediate vision and ask for apt similes.

The pupil is usually assigned a composition for which he may choose any topic which lends itself to use of a particular writing device.

Most of the student's narration assignments are done in his story notebook. The first lesson on the short story introduces him to the best source of story material—his personal experience. His first assignment is to begin a story-material notebook. Enthusiasm grows as his notebook grows from general notations (interesting people, places I have been, favorite pastimes, feelings which are strong in me, pictures which suggest ideas, etc.) to samples of writing techniques (character, plot outline, dialog, etc.) centering on his specific, gradually emerging short story.

For correction of the composition, I take three readings. The first is for my own sheer enjoyment of the child's total product, while the second is for notation (using standard symbols) of errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, construction, etc. The third reading is for careful analysis of content. I always write a personal note at the top of the pupil's paper praising the best features of his composition. At the end of the paper, I pencil any suggestions for improvement.

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[2]Julie Ann Carlson, "Creative Fluency in Composition," Master's thesis, University of Rhode Island 1965.

[3]Alvina T. Burrows et al., *They All Want to Write* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1952), p. 31.

I do not write letter marks on the papers. Grades are written in the marking book; only remarks appear on the students' papers. Mechanical errors are not usually weighed in the assignment of a letter grade.

An informal record of the pupils' writing growth is kept in a file box containing a file folder for each child. Into this folder go all of his writings of the school year, including any poems, stories, essays, etc., which he has written on his own. This is a ready reference for watching the pupil's writing growth, and the student is encouraged to examine his folder often and even to borrow it overnight or for the weekend. He is urged to make copies for himself and to share his creative writing with members of his family.

In the actual sharing of the week's compositions, I have used a variety of techniques which individualize. The pleasure that this part of the creative writing program gives to each pupil is outweighed only by the personal note to each pupil praising and encouraging his strongest points. One approach to the sharing is to have as many pupils as time permits read their works, following up by getting pupils' reactions about the most effective parts and asking for suggestions for improvement.

Another approach is to have pupils sit in a circle and pass the compositions (identified by number only) around the circle for individual reading. A sheet is attached to each theme on which the reader is asked to comment about (1) what he thinks is the best part, (2) what he suggests might be improved, and (3) what he thinks about the physical features of the paper (readability factors).

A dramatic sharing of the pupils' best works is the sharing of them with other classes. Or the students will enjoy presenting impromptu programs of their writings in their own classroom.

Having workshop periods in which pupils are free to present writing problems for help and suggestions from classmates is yet another individualizing feature.

Composition lends itself naturally to the integration of all language skills and the total curriculum. Spelling assumes practical importance, for the young writer's written symbols must convey his thoughts and feelings to his readers. Each word must be physically recognized by his readers and connote exact meanings. The pupil's personal and standard spelling word lists with attendant definitions are an important writing tool.

Stories in readers and literature are doubly enjoyed by the student, since he reads and listens not only for information and enjoyment: he has added a third dimension—that of the novice writer who appreciates the professional's artistic use of techniques and devices. You will be amazed at the emergence and growth of his first efforts at literary criticism.

Whether you teach word relationships through traditional grammar or modern linguistics, your young writer will sense the relationship between harmonious word patterns and his own writing. He will be delighted if he can analyze some of his own composition sentences in grammar study. Capitalization and punctuation are also viewed as useful tools.

Penmanship becomes more purposeful when it is obvious that it enhances the appearance and readability of his "brain child."

Writing is both an important and useful tool for any area of the total curriculum, but creative writing enriches every subject and exposes interrelationships among subjects. Most important, it is a master key to individualization.

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Encouraging Individuality in the Classroom

The problem of encouraging individuality in the classroom is greatest for those of us who teach in the armed forces. The men I meet every day belong to the U.S. Army; they are young enlisted men, high school graduates, competing with one another for appointments to the United States Military Academy at West Point. To gain acceptance they must be proficient both as students and soldiers.

Servicemen are actively discouraged from independent thought and action and are asked to be uniform. These men wear Army uniforms in class. Their haircuts are uniformly short, their desks are uniformly neat. Classes are homogeneous and seating is determined by proficiency, with the less capable men to the front. They are called to attention at the start and conclusion of each class.

At times my problem as an Army officer and instructor seems insurmountable, and yet I know that in the Army as elsewhere individuality always is, ultimately, a virtue.

I have found four principles to be helpful in encouraging individuality in my classes. As individuality suggests contrast, *use differences among students.* Do not assume that students are the same simply because they have been treated as numbers or because they look alike. They bring to the classroom differences of background, interest and capability. Thus their very diversity can be the key to individuality in the classroom if the teacher is not afraid of spirited discussions. Stimulate debate among students and they will feel it is their classroom as well as the teacher's. They will volunteer more readily and will realize that difference is essential to education.

As conformity suggests sameness, *avoid standardization* in all its forms. Standardized theme or term paper assignments suggest standard approaches and answers. The student will try to provide the conclusions he imagines you expect rather than those which he might have drawn had you been less restrictive. Then too, don't announce that such and such a

topic "has worked well in the past," for this suggests that last year's students and this year's are really the same. The topics for a class should spring from that class itself. It is, undoubtedly, less time-consuming to read fifty papers entitled "Why I Am at College" than fifty on a variety of subjects, but the student will feel freer if he can select the topic within the broad subject area which you have delineated. The student must know that he is being treated in a personal manner before he will respond in kind. It need hardly be said that standardization in seating is as degrading as it is anachronistic. "I'll get to know your names quicker" is a poor justification for the seating chart. The student will feel that you can get to know him only if he remains in one place; he wants you to recognize his mind no matter where in the room his body is located.[1]

Students who see diversity in the world of ideas will try to respond in fresh and original ways. Therefore, *be inductive rather than deductive.* Break down generalities and follow their implications along the lines which the students suggest. Capitalize on the fact that the student's imagination outruns his reason by admitting the truths the poet would accept. Encourage interdisciplinary endeavors: test generalities by discussing art and music as well as literature. In introducing modern American literature, instead of claiming that "the second half of the nineteenth century saw the rise of realism," a tired generality which the students will only feel compelled to support, examine Corot, Courbet, and Manet as well as Zola, Norris, Crane, and Dreiser, and let them conclude, if they will, that by the turn of the century realism supplanted romance. The scholar who defends his own narrow background with a feeble "but that's not my field" does not belong in the classroom. It is especially important in high school and in freshman writing courses that the student not be circumscribed by his teacher's limitations. Let the teacher have the humility to become a student.

Lastly, *be discursive.* It has always been assumed that the worst of the classroom sins is digression. This misconception originates with students themselves, for they enjoy moments of digression and see them as respites from the monotony of the syllabus. On occasion they scheme and make a concerted effort to sidetrack the teacher. Surely, as teachers and students we no longer believe that what is enjoyable is wrong. While reading *The Taming of the Shrew* it might well be illuminating to be sidetracked into a discussion of the woman's rights movement in 1970, or even into a dis-

[1]Procedures are most standardized in the government and, therefore, in Army teaching. Every sheet printed at the Government Printing Office is numbered and dated and is used until it is replaced.

cussion of hippie communes in California. The danger of making education itself an eight-to-three digression in terms of the student's life is much greater than that of wasting time. Let the teacher demonstrate that the education of individuals does not dismiss their own interests as trivial. He must incorporate the student's world into that of the classroom if he ever expects the classroom to affect the outside world. "If it Lacks Relevance, It Isn't Literature."[2]

Recently, a classroom experience which happens to exemplify the foregoing principles has demonstrated to me their value. I announced a "worst hometown newspaper" contest to the 250 men in our school. The students, by the way, were far more enthusiastic about discovering the worst paper than they ever would have been about the best. They were excited by the fact that the school was sanctioning a search for the terrible rather than the excellent; they assumed they were getting away with something.[3] Several teachers were appointed judges, and we established as our criteria bad taste, ignorance, and magnification of the trivial. Our contest was formed along the lines of the Academy Awards, i.e., there were several categories, such as worst overall paper, worst editorial page, worst photographs, advertisements, etc. The men sent home for their papers, and in a week my desk was heaped high with newspapers from small towns and large cities in over half the states.

I realized from the start that the basis of the contest and its major virtue would be its appeal to differences among the students. Of course, the contest did stir up discussions about states and newspapers, but it did more. It encouraged even the most reticent types to speak out and argue in the classroom. And the discussions quickly moved from the trite to the fascinating. We were soon arguing the merits of editorials; discussing the differences between a small town newspaper and a big paper, provincialism and prejudice. We learned about journalism and effective writing, and also about America. We tested generalities concerning the "silent majority," "liberals," and "rednecks" by analyzing editorials on the same subject in small town and major city newspapers from all sections of the country. We had made the students' world the real classroom. We had been digressive. We had enjoyed it thoroughly. Did we encourage individuality? We never could agree on a winner.

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[2]Thomas E. Sanders of Miami Dade Junior College presented a paper entitled "If It Lacks Relevance, It Isn't Literature" at the Southeast Regional Conference on English in the Two-Year College, recently held in Washington, D.C.

[3]The negative approach is often the most successful. See Saki's "The Storyteller" in which naughty little children are fascinated, overjoyed, and quieted by the story of the "horribly good" girl who is devoured by a wolf.

Helen Wagner

Open Lab: Seeing Kids as People

At the beginning of each year, the good teacher vows to make *this* year really meaningful for students and to individualize programs to meet specific needs. But how does one begin?

In an effort to get better acquainted with the one hundred and twenty seventh graders newly assigned to our interdisciplinary team, we decided to schedule small group discussions. Six to eight students were randomly assigned to each group. The question for consideration: "What are the problems common to most kids in the middle school?" With little hesitation the groups launched into an enthusiastic discussion. Each group selected one student to report its findings to the entire team.

As I listened to the reports, it dawned on me that in one way or another every group was stressing the same two points: "Nobody ever listens to us!" and "We're so busy learning what we *have* to learn that we never have time to learn what we *want* to learn!"

Now it was time for me to ask some questions of myself. What were the implications of these two issues for me as an adult working with young people? How could I, as an English teacher, make English a more vital force in their lives this year? Not simple questions at all.

With the cooperation of our four team teachers of science, social studies, mathematics, and English, we decided to schedule as a trial a free choice period thirty minutes long during the week. (The flexibility of a block of team time makes such scheduling simple.) During this time any student would be permitted to contact any of us for any purpose the student desired. A simple signout sheet indicating the student's name and destination was used. The only limitation was that the student, once he had made his choice, must remain in the selected room for the entire period.

As I anxiously awaited our first session, more questions flitted through my mind: Would the group be only remedial students? Would I be able to handle a variety of needs? Would anyone even come to the English room at all?

At the first session only five students arrived: Patty and Sue, who always had their noses in a book, even in the cafeteria; Russ, who apparently considered this a time to earn brownie points by charming the teacher; Nancy, who seemed to be behind in her letter writing and spent all of her time engaged in this activity; and Dan, who said not a word but spent the entire period strolling about the room, fingering the brightly colored pocket books displayed on racks. (He never opened any of them.)

The thirty minutes seemed endless. I wanted things to start happening. *Nothing* was going as I had expected.

At our teacher evaluation meeting all four of us reported similar experiences, except the social studies teacher who had been inundated by kids poring over the maps and globes in her room. But we decided to ask the kids what they thought of the free-choice period.

At the student evaluation session, the majority of the group was vigorous in its enthusiasm and asked for another session. We wondered: Did they consider this "goof-off" time? Was the experience of making free choices such a treat for them? Could it be that maybe something had happened during that time after all?

And so we tried it again. This time eleven students, including the original five, arrived in the English room. That was encouraging. Eventually the group varied from twelve to forty-two. It took three or four sessions before kids began to open up and obvious things began to happen in the Open Lab (so dubbed by the students).

Bob confided that he had repeated two previous grades and he *had* to pass this year. He explained that he had never been able to write "about spring and stuff like that and anyway I can't spell." In a conference with his mother it was agreed that Bob would simply be graded "Pass" so long as he made an honest effort. His writing, often only two sentences at the beginning, gradually improved and as time went on I noticed fewer words were misspelled. I learned quite a lot about hot rods from reading Bob's compositions.

As I sought to discuss with Patty the book she was reading, she suddenly burst out, "I don't really like to read all the time. It's just that I don't know how to talk to people." Obviously Patty needed opportunities to be part of various-sized groups discussing common readings or other projects. The English class certainly offered opportunity for group work, and slowly Patty responded.

I thought Dan would rub the pictures off the pocket books before he asked me, "Could you help me learn to read?" Together we outlined a program for Dan, and blessed with the aid of an understanding paraprofessional, his progress was rapid. One day he volunteered to read part of a

story aloud, although haltingly, to a group. When he concluded, his group broke into spontaneous applause. (A marvelous rapport develops among kids in a group like this which they have joined by choice.)

I learned that Russ, the non-stop talker, was one of seven children. By the time he finished his paper route each day, everyone had settled down to do homework, television, and chores. No one was at all interested in listening to him. Gradually students took my place as Russ' listener and the talking became a two-way experience in communication.

And there were others—Jack, the superior student, who read omnivorously and remarked, "I never have time to read just for fun"; Angelina, who forgot, or at least controlled, her fear before groups as she demonstrated how to make tortillas; Bill and Tom who wrote and later produced a play involving their classmates.

I wish I could report that Open Lab was 100 percent successful. But Lou and Mary continued to spend their time playing tic-tac-toe at the chalkboard. One small group always retreated to a corner table where they chatted quietly. Two or three students were never able to settle on any one activity but changed from reading to shelving the books to arranging bulletin boards. But maybe these activities served a purpose too. What a treat to have thirty minutes to use as one pleases.

But was this English? I like to think it was. Of course, thirty minutes per week were insufficient for spectacular accomplishment. However, everything I learned about individual students during Open Lab could be and was applied to their regular class activities. In this way I could individualize the course to fit the student rather than fitting the student to a prescribed course of study. Once I began to look at the needs of individual kids as people, their needs as English students became clearer and could more easily be met in areas with real significance to them. And who knows—in the long run, what happened to Russ and Don and Patty may make more difference in their lives than any number of formal English assignments might have done.

Perhaps the effectiveness of this program can best be measured by the reaction of the students themselves. On the final evaluation of the year's activities by each student, seventy-eight percent commented, in some form: "Next year be sure to have Open Lab. It helped me more than any part of school this year."

Hannah Middle School
East Lansing, Michigan

Richard Blough

Getting to Know You

Wanting a problem sophomore class to tell it really like it is, I asked each student to *think* about school and write his immediate response and feeling by completing these initial phrases:

1. I get so mad . . .
2. Sometimes, I wonder . . .
3. I wish . . .
4. If I had . . .

Each student is to be commended for his frankness and honesty in reporting his feelings at the moment. Leaving out some personal notes directed to certain members of the faculty, very little editorial work was done to their remarks which follow:

1. I get so mad . . .

when I get blamed for something I did not do
when I am trying to understand the teacher and everyone is talking
when nobody seems to want to learn a thing
when there is a show of unfairness
when the teacher trys to put the screw to you
because of some of the damn teachers in school
because there is someone in this school that bugs me
when teachers give me a lot of work and I am not in the mood for it
when I get suspended without even having a chance to give "my side" of the story

2. Sometimes, I wonder . . .

if teachers will ever come up to date and realize that the world has changed from the past 30 or 35 years (hair, dress)
why some people have it rough and others have a good home
why some people want to quit as soon as they turn sixteen
what makes those guys do stuff like calling teachers dirty names

why ——— is teaching here
why students who want to learn can't because of ———
if it is the teacher who does not know how to understand the way I try to tell things
if the teacher will just once let me alone
if teachers know what they are doing
about the teachers if they really care if we get through or not

3. I wish . . .

this class would settle down and start getting to work
I was in another class
we could choose our own seats
I were smarter and could be a teacher and understand teens in school
I could control myself so I can be nice to people because I like people
I could make better grades in English
everyone would stay in school and go to college
some boys could be taken out of class
the world would have more freedom than right now
the boys who consider themselves men would act like it
I could carry a knife without teachers yelling at me

4. If I had . . .

the power, I would kick some kids out and not even let them in night school
the classes I wanted to take I could be the way I am now—because I hate almost every class I got
the choice to take a few pupils out of class, I would
my way, I could stay in school and learn
my choice of school and jail, I would go to jail
to go to school again, I would because I know now what things that I have done wrong and I would try harder and not goof off and maybe I would be a better person
a half decent job, I would quit school
a lot of power, I would do away with school because after a certain time, school gets extremely boring

Reading all of the answers carefully to get some basic idea of the general feeling of the class, any observer can sense that these teenagers do *care* about themselves, their school, their classmates, their studies, their teachers and their world.

Any sampling of these reactions would remind one of the repetitious ideas that one sees in underground newspapers of our high schools across America—imprisonment of schools, the prejudice of teachers, and the pressures of the system.

As a department head vitally interested in the education of young people and in the effectiveness of the English teachers who teach these

students, I believe the great value of this survey has been in some of the resolutions I have formulated:

1. To foster the learning climate in which these students can perform more readily and successfully.
2. To fill the English Study Center with more appropriate material and literature to reach these learners individually.
3. To bring more emphasis on a personal basis of our school philosophy (the education of the mind, the hand, and the heart).

In the future, I would recommend a continuous study of this type to deal with teachers, school athletics, the community, the war in Viet Nam, home, church, movies, television and any other concept or idea of value to the student.

Incidentally this particular class was charged with the inability to write or discuss any subject. The rhetoric and voice of the students writing on a subject they are really concerned about, however, proved this to be an idle and false conclusion.

"Getting to Know You Survey" is an excellent way to get acquainted in a hurry and to have some necessary goals placed before you early in the course. No other subject field offers the array of books and materials to fulfill these goals so successfully.

Emmerich Manual High School
Indianapolis, Indiana

D. Bruce Lockerbie

Composition: "Someone . . . Speaking to Someone Else"

A few weeks ago a discouraged senior wrote on a *Hamlet* examination,

> I don't know anything at all about Eliot's theory of the objective correlative and I guess I should leave this space blank. But you get paid to read examination papers, and I might as well make you earn your salary by reading my paper.

After I had calmed down, I spoke gently with the boy, asking him to re-read his statement to me. He had no need of rebuke from me for the rudeness of his remark. He was thoroughly ashamed of himself and I was satisfied that he had learned as important a lesson about tone as I had failed to teach him about Eliot's critical theory.

Each of us is thoroughly familiar with the problems of tone. The man or woman who ignores the tone with which he speaks soon obtains a reputation for boorishness and spends much of his life apologizing to offended acquaintances, not for what he said but for how he said it. Spoken language has inflection and emphasis, aided by physical gestures. Written language also has inflection and emphasis.

Tone in writing is a reflection of the way the writer feels toward his audience. At the moment of his frustration and anxiety, my student felt contempt for me and my position as his teacher. He did not say so, but his smart-alecky tone—the gratuitous manner in which he presumed to decide whether or not I would have earned my salary if I failed to read his paper—unveiled the distance between us. Walker Gibson illustrates tone in this spatial metaphor of distance and elevation: A pompous speaker may address his audience from the distant remove of his scholarship; he is both above us and apart from us. A chummy, cute speaker, such as we meet in advertising, narrows the gulf as much as possible; he tries to assure us of

his concern for our welfare as he snuggles for intimacy. These are manifestations of tone.

But what of the content of our communications, the subject? The writer must also consider how he feels about his subject. This is often a different relationship from the way he feels toward his audience. For this reason, Walker Gibson differentiates tone from attitude, the relationship between the speaker and his subject. For example, my friend and I may argue pleasantly over the effectiveness of the New York Giants' quarterback, Fran Tarkenton. Our tone can remain friendly, even if our attitudes toward the subject differ and are, in fact, hostile. I can say,

"But, Charley, old buddy, I think Tarkenton is a lousy quarterback."

My tone toward my friend Charley has nothing to do with my attitude toward the quarterback. In another situation, however, I might say,

"Charley, old buddy, I think you have a lousy sense of humor."

If I mean what I say—and the total context of my remarks must be weighed—Charley will quickly recognize that the phrase "old buddy" does not mean quite the same thing this time. My tone toward him has merged with my attitude toward his sense of humor, and we are in for a brawl.

These are fundamentals surrounding the essential question, "*Who* is speaking to *whom* about *what*?" Speaking voice, audience, tone, and attitude. And all of this is determined by the choice of language and its arrangement—the rhetoric, in other words. It is inferred by the reader, and its effectiveness is judged by him.

Now what does all this do for the student? What can rhetorical role-playing games mean to him? It is my claim that this approach allows the student to write from where he is.

I begin with the premise that, whether consciously or not, most secondary school students are more aware of the power of language than we give them credit for. They know fad talk that is acceptable to their group, and they laugh at us when we try to play the role—a condescending role, for the most part—of the cool and groovy cat rappin' like we know where it's at. Some of my students, for example, were appalled at the New York Protestant Council's attempt to evangelize with the following spot commercial:

> Just because the world turns you off, it's no time to cop out on God. Church is where it's at. It's the one place where you can really do your thing.

They regarded this as phony, unreal. Conversely, teenagers can spot in themselves and in others the falseness of inflated language, balloon-bag rhetoric like that which wafts through high school auditoriums on most commencement days. Students can generally spot the more blatantly offensive appeals, although they cannot always articulate what it is about the rhetoric that offends them.

Once we establish the student's recognition of the importance of language, our next step is to determine what causes the particular effects we have observed. From a careful examination of models we must progress to a close look at the diction and syntax of each sentence, for it is by the exact choice and arrangement of words, the rhythm and length of sentences, that we shall find and create the speaking voice we choose.

In his amusing and instructive monograph, *The Five Clocks*, Martin Joos categorizes native English usage into five styles or levels of diction: from top to bottom, they are *frozen, formal, consultative, casual*, and *intimate*. May I presume to offer categories of my own? Keeping the same five scales, I should call them *highly formal* or ceremonial; *formal* or literary and technical; *standard* or conventional among educated persons; *informal* or conversational; and *highly informal* or bull-session/coffee klatch chatter. To illustrate, here are five statements about marriage.

Highly formal or ceremonial:

> Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God, and in the face of this Congregation, to join together this man and this woman in holy Matrimony.

Formal or literary and technical (in this case, fulfilling etiquette):

> Miss Mary Alexandra Jones, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Jones, will be wed on January 31 in Springfield to Robert Archer Smith, son of Dr. and Mrs. Archer Smith of Chicago. Her parents have announced the engagement.

Standard or conventional usage among educated persons:

> Robert Smith and Mary Jones will be married on January 31.

Informal or conversational:

> Say, I hear that Bob and Mary are getting married on January 31.

Highly informal or chatter (in this case, current fad talk):

> Bob and this chick Mary are latching on come January 31.

Each of these levels of usage represents an appropriately chosen speaking voice for some occasion. The *highly formal* or ceremonial voice of the

clergyman officiating at the marriage rite is appropriate at that time. The *highly informal* voice of, say, one of the bridegroom's friends discussing the wedding in a college dorm may also be appropriate. Neither is more correct than the other; according to social conventions, however, one will be more appropriate than the other.

With the exception of rare use of ceremonial or ritual language—repeating the oath of office, signing our name to a bank loan, writing out a business contract—most of what we write ranges among the other four levels of language. Seldom do we remain frozen for long at a particular level. Again, there are exceptions: a 200-page doctoral dissertation or a 1500-word term paper will both be written in *formal* language. But in most of our experiences, what we write will reflect the continuing adjustments we are making with our audience as we speak—adjustments that include a bit of humor, the use of a popular cliche, the quotation of a serious proverb, the use of a highly technical term. For the most part, however, we decide upon an appropriate level and adjust only one level upwards or downwards; jumps of more than one level are too often unsettling to our audience and, in fact, may suggest that the speaker himself has not found the appropriate voice.

There are numerous ways of drawing on a student's latent awareness of language distinctions. Discriminating among terms for a given color—red, scarlet, flaming red, rouge, ruddy, blood-red, crimson, or for an emotion—joy, delight, pleasure, exultation, and so on, is a simple introduction to the fact that words bear subtle nuances, that there is in fact no true synonym, that each word is uniquely itself.

After the student has been reminded that words are important of themselves, he needs to be shown that the combinations of words produce a wonderful variety of effects. He needs to be shown the remarkable elasticity and flexibility of the English sentence. He needs to be made aware of the rhetorical options before him. Here the particular methods of Frances Christensen or Paul Roberts or another linguist may be helpful. But beyond learning the several possible locations for the adverb *only* or the slots for a prepositional phrase of possession, the student must be shown that behind every written expression there must be a conscious mind at work: "Someone speaking to someone else." As the writer of the sentence, it should matter to him whether or not his audience understands what he means. Because his writing is an expression of himself, he must be encouraged toward self-respect and a high view of the importance of his own creativity. This is the glory of the human being, that he can care about what he does, and that he can be self-critical, for as Joseph Wood Krutch wrote,

> it is in Discourse of one kind or another—whether it be exposition, debate, artistic creation, or mere soliloquy—that the distinctively human aspects of conscious life manifest themselves.

Writing exercises find the student where he is, but they do not necessarily leave him there. Part of the whole value of Walker Gibson's method is that its role-playing emphasis reaches into the manner of living we know so well. We are individuals comprised of many *personae*. We shift through a set number of established *personae* every day with such routineness that we scarcely notice the change from husband-to-father-to-passenger-to-administrator-to-teacher-to-coach-to-pupil-to-gourmet-to-theatre critic-to-lover. Only when our routine is disturbed, as when we find it necessary to become a policeman or a soldier in a moment of crisis, do we lose our equilibrium. Otherwise we feel well adjusted.

But our students may not all be mature enough to understand that role-playing is natural, indeed obligatory to good health. Some will pride themselves on their sovereign individuality, their constancy, and fear for the intrusion of hypocrisy. For this reason, it is helpful to contrive assignments which force a shift in speaking voices as the dramatic situation shifts. I gave as a recent assignment two letters expressing the identical opinion on President Nixon's November 3, 1969, address. The first letter was to be written to the President; the second, to an assumed twelve-year-old brother. I find useful an assignment which asks, first, for an argument for or against the relevance of a school motto to a contemporary teenager; then, a day or two later, the student reverses his position and thinks through the argument as another person might see it.

Developing a sense of audience helps to reinforce the importance of considering each word. How do you describe an egg-beater to a blind child? How do you explain baseball to a European exchange student? How do you explain some article of your faith to a person of another religion? How do you discuss with an adult admirer of Vivaldi and Buxtehude the meaning of the alleged Paul McCartney disappearance? As a starter, the student soon learns, he must try to follow the advice of Atticus Finch and "stand in someone else's shoes."

This, in sum, is the approach to composition I am using. We cannot learn to write—no matter how many sentence patterns and transformations we master—until we have begun to value for ourselves the mystery that sets us apart from the animals: the gift of verbal expression, "Someone . . . speaking to someone else."

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Long Island, New York

Barbara Sussman

Compositional Climates

What follows is a discussion of the ways in which I attempted to "humanize English" for a remedial writing class of twenty five junior college students.

At first I was interested in knowing how the students viewed their educational needs and how they would go about filling them if allowed freedom in developing the course. The students met in small groups for several sessions and decided they needed the classic remedial composition course, unchanged except for a few minor rules relating to homework and attendance. (I would not collect or grade homework, and before dropping a student for poor attendence I would be required to meet with a student committee to evaluate the case.) It was at this point that I realized that for me to be able to reach them as individuals, I would have to change the students' perception of their classroom experience. I decided to begin by breaking the large, formal class into small, dynamic seminar groups, and from there move to more individualized teaching techniques. The small seminar groups enabled me to establish a rapport and trust between me and the students and among the students themselves. Later in the semester, a close working relationship between all members of the class was effectively accomplished.

The groups met two or three times a week, sometimes with me, sometimes without. When available, different rooms were used for the groups, and depending upon what the task was, I met with them briefly or for longer periods of time. During the morning and late afternoon the groups met in the student lounge or in an available empty classroom. When the lounge was too crowded for intellectual activity, the groups shared the same classroom or used a conference room or part of the faculty office.

Generally there were three types of activities in which the groups engaged: discussing questions and reading assignments, creating materials

to facilitate learning of concepts then at hand, and criticizing papers written by group members. I encouraged the students to discuss their class work with each other; at first they considered this cheating, and it took quite a while before the students felt free enough to exchange their ideas. The smallness of the groups (six to eight students) allowed for a more even exchange and dialogue once the students met a few times and got to know each other. The feeling they were there to help rather than compete with each other gradually encouraged the more voluble students to help their less articulate peers learn to join discussions. During these sessions I eventually gave up the role of discussion leader for the preferable one of observer, for the ultimate task of the teacher is to be dispensable. The student must finally learn to learn by himself, to be his own guide through the world of knowledge once he has mastered the methods and skills he needs to guide himself intelligently.

The seminars helped the students to see me as a fellow human being. It enabled me to observe the students interact more and in a different way than they would have solely in the large classroom, and thus I had more insights into them as individuals.

After the groups had been initiated and the students were fairly comfortable in their new situation, I asked them to write journals which I would read but not grade. The purpose of this, I explained, was to alleviate the students' panic when confronted with a blank sheet of paper by having them write a little bit every day. Because the students had gotten to know me, most of them did not resent this as an intrusion into their personal lives or as just more work poured on by a cruel English teacher. From the journals I was able to learn more about my students from the topics on which they chose to write and the way in which they went about writing. When I began to meet the students in conferences about their themes, I was able to draw on very valuable information to help the student with his writing problems.

The personal, individual conferences were important but impossible to have with every student for every theme (they wrote about eight themes and many short paragraphs during the course of the term), so I then asked the students to bring in a small reel of tape. Most students had tape recorders available at home or through a friend. I recorded my comments and evaluation of their papers on this tape. (Unfortunately, I did not have a cassette recorder available; this would have saved me the time I spent threading the tapes.) Since I spoke rather than wrote my comments, I was able to criticize more individually and incisively than if I had made written comments. I allowed the students to rewrite themes

for a higher grade if they wished. This and student questions gave me additional feedback on the effectiveness of my comments.

The teaching materials were diverse, with an emphasis in the beginning on visual materials and personal experiences. The course itself was experimental, and much of the material was devised especially for that course by me and the students themselves as the course progressed. Most importantly, the students wrote a variety of paragraphs and themes in and out of class.

The atmosphere in the classroom was achieved through a series of teaching techniques involving group and individual activity with the ultimate goal of fostering self confidence and individuality in the student's ability to communicate both in class discussion and in his writing. Certainly the students' writing did not miraculously reach graduate school fluency, but by the end of the term they were not as afraid to write as they had been, and they were able to write more quantitatively and qualitatively than they had when they entered. What is the proper way to evaluate the effectiveness of the course? Grading? The students were graded by me, not a very objective measure. Most of the students did well in freshman composition the following term, but that doesn't tell us much, either; we have no correlation on the standards of grading of the other teachers and myself. Grammar test? Fluency in a grammar test does not indicate fluency in writing. Finally, it is possible that this improvement was part of their natural intellectual development and not due to the classroom experience. All I can offer is my impression that it was a successful venture: I enjoyed going into class every day, and judging from the students' attendance and active participation, most of them felt the same way.

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R. Baird Shuman
Henry L. Sublett, Jr.

Homework: A Starting Point for Individualization

If homework is to have meaning, it must have coherent, long-term objectives related to the course or courses for which it is being done. Ideally, few blanket homework assignments would be made, although some might be defensible. Again ideally, teachers in varied subject fields would work together in formulating assignments which would cross-cut discrete subject area lines. Homework in most areas of the humanities would broaden throughout the school year into project-centered, out-of-class assignments rather than requiring students to read ten pages and answer fifteen questions. In some cases students would work individually on projects; in others they would work together in groups of three or more students. For optimum results, each group in the class would be working on different facets of a similar problem, and each group would be responsible for defining for study its own area of some overall problem and of remaining within the limitations imposed by its definition. Rather than doing day-to-day homework assignments to be presented to the teacher, students would make reports to their individual groups based on what they have done outside of class. Periodically, each group would make progress reports to the teacher and perhaps to the rest of the class. The student's ultimate classroom end in this sort of approach would be to present findings to the class. But the ultimate educational ends—ends which would carry through into the lives and careers of many students—would be the much broader ones of teaching students (1) to work toward the solution of a problem, (2) to assume and to delegate responsibility, (3) to organize and give focus to problem-solving activity, and (4) to function meaningfully in a long-term cooperative effort.

One can think of many activities which might lend themselves to this approach, but let us assume for purposes of illustration here that a junior high school class is going to concern itself with a unit on occupations. Such a unit might cross-cut English and social studies and could

conceivably have a tie-in with mathematics, science, foreign languages, and other areas of study. Most junior high school libraries have extensive holdings in the area of occupations and careers. While a unit on occupations and careers may not focus specifically on studies in English, it does provide a number of key opportunities for basic assignments in the composition and communication processes.

Once the class had decided to pursue such a unit—and let us assume here that the decision has been arrived at cooperatively during the first week of school in September when the teachers perhaps would not know the students very well—the teacher would necessarily begin to formulate some long-term plans. A first step would inform the school librarian of the class decision so that appropriate materials on various ability levels might be conveniently gathered in one place. The teacher alone might inform the librarian, but it might also be good at this point to ask for student volunteers to serve on an archives committee whose responsibility would be to provide liaison between the librarian and the class.

Before groups can be assigned and sub-areas of study planned, the teacher should know more about the students in the class, and they should have the opportunity to know something about each other. One means of achieving this end is to have each student write an autobiographical essay outside of class. However, at the beginning of a term, the teacher would be more likely to get honest results from students by asking them as their first out-of-class assignment merely to list those fifteen or twenty things which they think have influenced their lives most or have contributed most to making them what they are. They might list people, places, books, movies, television shows, hobbies, animals, or anything else which has profoundly affected them. The teacher might do this assignment too, and the results of the assignment should be read and discussed in class.

Having now gained a clue to his students' interests, the teacher might consider what equipment the students are going to need in order to work effectively on their projects. If they are going to present materials on a broad range of occupations, they will probably need to develop some interviewing techniques and will have to work on developing their powers of observation. The first step toward developing interviewing techniques is that of learning to communicate orally with sufficient ease and confidence that the person being communicated with is at ease. The most direct route to achieving this goal is that of free and open classroom discussion. Once free discussion has become a commonplace, students can begin to work on mock interviews with each other, but they should not begin with mock interviews until a free and natural atmosphere for discussion has been established.

Human beings are notoriously unobservant. A second blanket assignment for students would be to have a student sit or stand for one minute in a familiar place—his bedroom, his kitchen, the hall outside his apartment, the back seat of his father's car—then go to another place and list all the things that he can remember from his one minute of observing, being as specific as possible. For example, "a bright picture, about 10 inches by 15 inches, of yellow and orange dahlias, in a one inch plain gold frame hanging about a foot above the green chair" would be much better than "a picture of some flowers." He could work on his list for as long as he wished and then check it against the spot at which he had been observing.

The next related assignment would be for the student to go to a familiar place and sit for two or three minutes, making a list of all sense impressions except visual ones of which he is aware. This assignment is best done with two or more students so that they can compare impressions, but a student who does not live within proximity of other students might do it with a brother or sister, a parent, or a neighbor.

The next step in observing would come with asking the student to observe human behavior, perhaps observing one person from a window, and to write all of the objective facts that he can about this one person and about what the person is doing. Again, a list would probably be as good as an essay for the purposes of the assignment. The next stage would be to observe someone performing occupationally. The student might watch a clerk in a supermarket, a gasoline station attendant, a janitor, a guard in a museum, an aide in the public library and jot down a list of the separate tasks which this person performs in his job in the course of two or three minutes, including such items as "takes out handkerchief, mops sweat from brow."

These assignments, all related, would then lead to an interview with someone the student knows (including a parent or relative) about the requirements of his job. The in-class reinforcement for this assignment would come from one or two classroom presentations on interviewing techniques followed by mock interviews. Interview questions might also be formulated by the class.

As this work is proceeding, the students would be coming to know each other better, and they would be working toward a definition of their occupational interests. The time would be fast approaching for the class to be subdivided into groups. The teacher might ask students to suggest occupations they would like to study. Probably the first result would be that students would suggest occupations like law, medicine, teaching, automotive repairing, or commercial aviation. Here the teacher must

guide the student into seeing that perhaps the first step is to find broad headings such as "service occupations" or "governmental occupations." Then the student will probably be able to see that subheadings suggest themselves. Under "service occupations," for example, an obvious breakdown would be "professional" and "non-professional" or "skilled," "semi-skilled," and "non-skilled."

Once the groups are formed, the delegation of responsibility should come from within the group. Peer disapproval will spur the lazy or recalcitrant student much more effectively than teacher disapproval. Groups should be expected to meet occasionally on their own time. If geographical factors prevent this, then discussion of group work should be carried on over the telephone. Class time should be provided for group meetings one day a week.

The large group/small group/individual approach outlined thus far should serve as valuable experience in helping children learn to work cooperatively and to accept responsibility as individuals. It should provide good background, too, for other special types of individualized instruction. Successful experience in the small group approach, for example, should give the student and the teacher courage to try more homework on a *completely* individualized basis—project-centered homework which has been planned from the start by the teacher and the student for that particular student and which is based on that student's special interests and abilities. This type of homework would usually be long-range and might involve persons other than the student and the teacher on a continuing basis. For example, a professor of English at a nearby college or university might devote an hour every other week for several months to working individually with a budding young poet or story teller. A local musician might work with a gifted student on a topic in the history of music or in counterpoint, harmony, and composition.

Individualized homework such as that just described might involve progress reports to the class, although these would not be nearly so important as individual progress reports to the teacher. This raises the whole matter of time. Teachers are busy people. Small amounts of time will be available for conferences before school, and somewhat larger amounts of time for conferences at the end of the school day. Then, too, teachers may find themselves so caught up in the satisfaction of this type of work with individual youngsters that they will want to offer one night a week as "Open Line Night" so that students may telephone the teacher at home to discuss project work. The teacher, of course, must insist on reasonable limits for this type of conference.

Group interaction with emphasis on individualized instruction

through homework, as described here, will create greater interest in a subject area and make school in general more meaningful to students.

The truest and most memorable learning experiences are derived from problem-solving activities. Indeed, the bulk of human energy is expended in such activities. The best preparation that the school can give its students for coping with life is to provide them with opportunities to work both cooperatively and independently on projects which are related to their own lives and interests.

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R. Glenn Martin

What Can We Really Individualize?

Individualized instruction seems often to be a mirage: how can one genuinely individualize instruction in a class of twenty, thirty, or forty students, all assembled in the same place at the same time? If the teacher does the instructing, say, with thirty students for a sixty-minute period, and if the instruction is literally individualized, then the teacher spends two minutes with each student. Over a year's time this comes to something like six hours per student—or less than one school day per year!

So why don't we come off it? Individualized instruction is pious nonsense. Our culture's deep dedication to the welfare of the individual is not constructively served by loose talk about one-to-one instructional arrangements. A teacher simply cannot be sliced into that many pieces or spread that thin.

Let us, instead, go at it from the other end. If individualized instruction is, for practical purposes, impossible, individualized *learning* is inevitable. A student learns exactly what he learns at exactly his own pace and in exactly his own way. Just as he breathes his own air and eats his own lunch, so he acquires his own education. A teacher can help him make his own education more or less manageable, more or less palatable, more or less humane, and more or less adequate for survival in a dangerous world; but the student does whatever learning is done: nobody can really plagiarize an education.

Individualization, then, is built in at the learner's end of the transaction, and this is, I think, where we'd better look for it: where we have something already going for us. If I may modify the usual kind of distinction between *teaching* and *instruction* for the purpose at hand, let me suggest that instruction has to do with the public *content* of education which can no more be individualized than one can individualize the date on which Christmas falls. Teaching, I would submit, has to do with whether the students are, in fact, learning: a teacher is someone who assumes this kind of responsibility for each of the individual students.

Let's go back to our thirty-student classroom and see how this distinction might work. If the teacher is merely an instructor (in the sense described), then he simply exhibits, imparts, conveys (or what have you) certain material, certain content which he thinks students can or should learn. A unilateral lecture, a film, a tape recording, an article in *Classroom Practices*—all are instructional devices which, by themselves, assume no responsibility for the amount of actual learning which will finally take place as a result of them. They may each do a conscientious job of trying to make learning possible; but they have no built-in mechanism that automatically determines whether they have succeeded. They bear the same relation to teaching that an article by a physician bears to medical practice. A patient may cure himself as a result of reading the article, and a student may learn as a result of instruction, but neither is the result of a firm commitment by the professional to the particular client.

The teacher of thirty students *can*, however, make such a commitment—just as the physician does to his patients or, for that matter, the airline to its passengers. (Consider the airlines as a means of individualizing travel without ever doing it on a one-to-one basis.) The teacher of thirty students cannot, of course, *guarantee* appropriate learning by each student. All he can do (and I think it is plenty) is assume responsibility for each student as an individual learner. Doctors lose patients, teachers lose students—and airlines lose passengers. The issue is not perfection but responsibility. A good teacher will do absolutely everything in his professional power to rescue from the disaster of non-learning every student who is entrusted to him.

In our thirty-student classroom, then, teaching begins, as it were, precisely where instruction stops. Homework is instruction, the "teacher talking" (in the sense deplored by many followers of interaction analysis) is instruction, even the largest part of an excellent class discussion is instruction. The teacher, not talking but thinking, lies back of these activities—planning, permitting, or encouraging them—seeing in them the means of discharging his responsibility to each unique individual in the class, strategizing with one eye on the clock or the calendar as to whether this is the quickest, the safest, the most productive route to learning for each person in the class. If the teacher is a complex strategist, the answer will almost always be that it is not, that some student needs to go by a different route, that some other student is not going at all, that still another student has already got there. This is the teaching that instruction is never precise enough to do. The acts which teaching leads to (as opposed to instruction) are the corridor and Coke conferences, the evening phone calls, the wakeful night that leads to a single question—or the

careful decision *not* to rush into some student's privacy at the moment. Where there is time, energy, and imagination, *teaching* may lead to differential assignments, multitracking within a class, exemption from a topic where the student is already competent, independent study, and a host of other devices chronically reinvented by those to whom teaching means responsibility for the student.

Ideally, I think the best way to individualize learning is to make sure that each student assumes responsibility for his own learning, just as the physician discharges us to our own medical recognizance once we are past the acute need for his services. But that is the goal, not the means of getting there. A *teacher* concerned with individualizing learning has some means of knowing how each student stands at all times. One way of doing this is to ask for an unstructured progress report from each student each week—a sort of what-have-I-learned-this-week kind of report to exceed not more than one or two pages. A perceptive teacher, reading over these reports, can learn a great deal about the situation of each student who submits one, and the margins of the report furnish the teacher with a vehicle for direct communication with each student on an individualized basis. The reports bring to light not only academic progress but student morale, feedback from class sessions, and a very live sense of what is really going on in the class as a whole. English classes have always afforded something like this kind of benefit from assigned themes, but the themes tend, in most cases, to be too impersonal and too unreal to say much about the student. The progress reports, on the other hand, deal directly and explicitly with the one issue that is paramount in all teaching—namely, how is the student doing?

I will not say, from my own experience, that reading such progress reports is an unmixed delight. Troubles can easily crop up in them that can devastate an otherwise restful weekend. But these, after all, are exactly the kinds of troubles that teaching is all about. Anyone merely repelled by such troubles probably ought to give up teaching and become an instructor.

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